THE Hudson REVIEW

CHARLES W. MILLARD:
Picasso Brujo

LANE DUNLOP:
The Catalogue of Childhood Memories

GERALD EARLY:
Hot Spicks Versus Cool Spades

SAMUEL HAZO:
From The Feast of Icarus

CHARLES TOMLINSON:
The Flood and other poems

Poems by RICHMOND LATTIMORE, PHILIP LEVINE, JOYCE CAROL OATES, PETER MAKUCK, BARRY SPACKS, IOANNA CARLSEN.

iews by MARVIN MUDRICK, MARCIA B. SIEGEL, .N FLOWER, WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD, ROBERT ASAHINA, 'ERSON HUNTER, VERNON YOUNG, G. E. MURRAY.

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5th American IMAGERY CONFERENCE

Psychology & Literature

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The 5th American Imagery Conference plans to bring together literature and psychology, balancing the two with an emphasis on literature as a positive technique for reflection on human action and emotion. Through perceptive and explorative programs, the Conference aims to offer an invaluable view into the relationship of psychology and literature.

call for programs

Chicago & New York

The 5th American Imagery Conference, sponsored by the International Imagery Association and the Journal of Mental Imagery, is scheduled to be held in October 1981 in Chicago and November 12-15, 1981 in New York City. Proposals are invited.

PROPOSALS FOR INDIVIDUAL PAPERS AND WORKSHOPS should consist of a 300-word summary and include: the title of the presentation; name, affiliation and complete mailing address of the author; name and affiliation of coauthor(s); and time and city requested on the program.

PROPOSALS FOR SYMPOSIA must provide a 300- word general summary as well as a 200-word summary of each participant's contribution. In addition, please furnish: the title of the program; titles of contributions; name, affiliation and complete mailing address of the chairperson; names and affiliations of the participants; names and affiliations of the discussants, if any; time and city requested on the program.

All programs must be submitted BY MAY 30, 1981, in triplicate, to: Akhter Ahsen, Ph.D., Chairman, 5th American Imagery Conference, c/o Brandon House, inc., P.O. Box 240, Bronx, New York 10471.

Brandon House, inc., is planning to publish a book based on the proceedings of the Conference. Authors of accepted contributions will be contacted later in this regard.

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The 50th Anniversary Hopwood Festival

April 9-11, 1981
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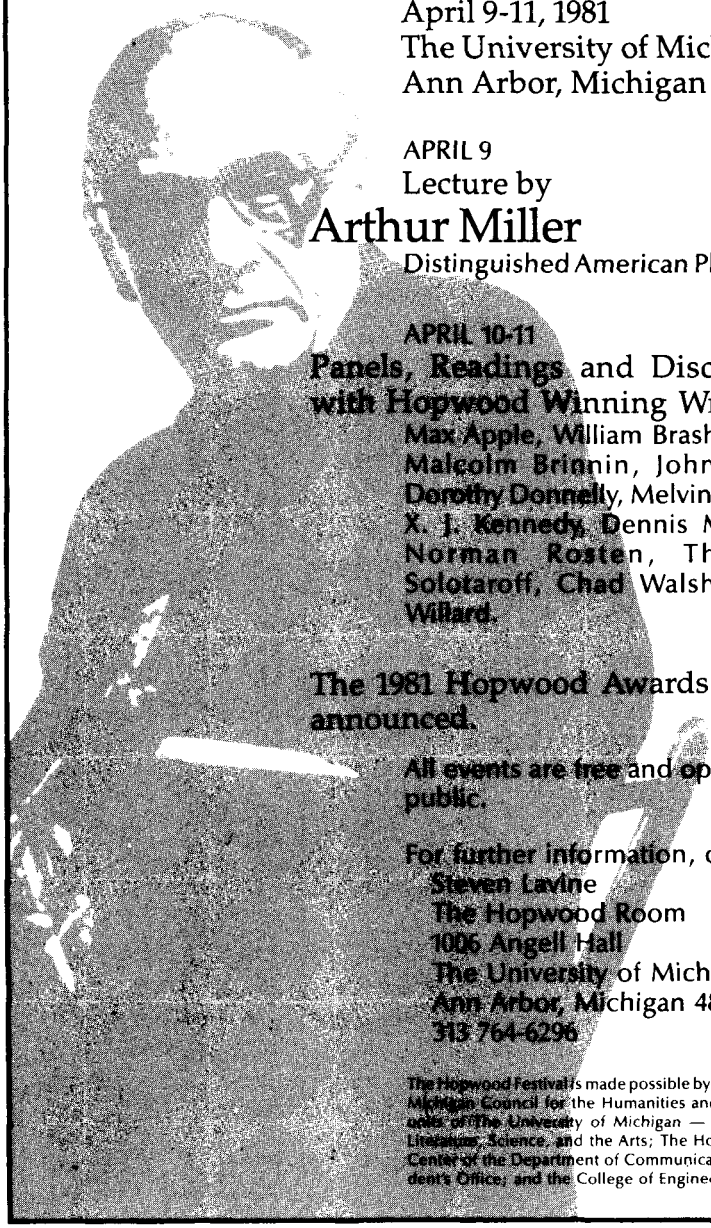

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All events are free and open to the public.

For further information, contact:
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THE Hudson Review

CONTENTS

The Flood; Severnside; In the Estuary; The Epilogue *(poems)* — CHARLES TOMLINSON — 9

The Catalogue of Childhood Memories *(memoir)* — LANE DUNLOP — 15

Roofs; Plea from the Angel of Good Luck; To a New Mother; The Window *(poems)* — PHILIP LEVINE — 34

Hot Spicks Versus Cool Spades — GERALD EARLY — 39

Shanhaikuan; They Used To Have a Homecoming Day; Aspects of Time; Home *(poems)* — RICHMOND LATTIMORE — 57

Forgetful America; The Proofs of God; Another *(poems)* — JOYCE CAROL OATES — 60

From *The Feast of Icarus* — SAMUEL HAZO — 63

Letter Poem; To the Snow-Walker *(poems)* — PETER MAKUCK — 70

Neilsen; Essence *(poems)* — BARRY SPACKS — 73

In a Manner of Speaking *(poem)* — IOANNA CARLSEN — 74

Picasso Brujo — CHARLES W. MILLARD — 77

Artisans of Space — MARCIA B. SIEGEL — 93

Theatre Chronicle — ROBERT ASAHINA — 99

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Reviews

Fiction Chronicle	DEAN FLOWER	105
Criticism as Literature	WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD	117
Life Direct and the Indifferential Calculus	MARVIN MUDRICK	125
The Court-Suit Laureates	JEFFERSON HUNTER	135
Poetry Chronicle: The Light Is Dark Enough	VERNON YOUNG	141
Seven Poets	G. E. MURRAY	155
To Our Readers		4
Notes on Contributors		104

To Our Readers

Publication of this issue is made possible, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

"The River," a new long poem by Frederick Morgan, designed and printed by Nadja, has been published in an edition limited to one hundred numbered copies signed by the author. A few copies remain, and are available from THE HUDSON REVIEW at $50.00 each, postage included.

We wish to remind readers who submit mss. to the *Review* that our summer moratorium on unsolicited mss. runs from June 1 to September 1.

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CHARLES TOMLINSON

The Flood

It was the night of the flood first took away
  My trust in stone. Perfectly reconciled it lay
Together with water—and does so still—
  In the hill-top conduits that feed into
Cisterns of stone, cisterns echoing
  With a married murmur, as either finds
Its own true note in such a unison.
  It rained for thirty days. Down chimneys
And through doors, the house filled up
  With the roar of waters. The trees were bare,
With nothing to keep in the threat
  And music of that climbing, chiming din
Now rivers ran where the streams once were.
  Daily, we heard the distance lessening
Between house and water-course. But floods
  Occur only along the further plains and we
Had weathered the like of this before
  —The like, but not the equal, as we saw,
Watching it lap the enclosure wall,
  Then topping it, begin to pile across
And drop with a splash like clapping hands
  And spread. It took in the garden
Bed by bed, finding a level to its liking.
  The house-wall, fronting it, was blind
And therefore safe: it was the doors
  On the other side unnerved my mind
—They and the deepening night. I dragged
  Sacks, full of a mush of soil
Dug in the rain, and bagged each threshold.
  Spade in hand, why should I not make
Channels to guide the water back
  Into the river, before my barricade
Proved how weak it was? So I began
  Feeling my way into the moonless rain,
Hacking a direction. It was then as though

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A series of sluices had been freed to overflow
All the land beneath them: it was the dark I dug
Not soil. The sludge melted away from one
And would not take the form of a trench.
This work led nowhere, with no bed
To the flood, no end to its sources and resources
To grow and to go wherever it would
Taking one with it. It was the sound
Struck more terror than the groundlessness I trod,
The filth fleeing my spade—though that, too,
Carried its image inward of the dissolution
Such sound orchestrates—a day
Without reprieve, a swealing away
Past shape and self. I went inside.
Our ark of stone seemed warm within
And welcoming, yet echoed like a cave
To the risen river whose tide already
Pressed close against the further side
Of the unwindowed wall. There was work to do
Here better than digging mud—snatching
And carrying such objects as the flood
Might seep into, putting a stair
Between the world of books and water.
The mind, once it has learned to fear
Each midnight eventuality,
Can scarcely seize on what is already there:
It was the feet first knew
The element weariness had wandered through
Eyeless and unreasoning. Awakened eyes
Told that the soil-sacked door
Still held, but saw then, without looking,
Water had tried stone and found it wanting:
Wall fountained a hundred jets:
Floor lay awash, an invitation
To water to follow it deriding door
On door until it occupied the entire house.
We bailed thorugh an open window, brushing
And bucketing with a mindless fervour
As though four hands could somehow find
Strength to keep pace, then oversway

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The easy redundance of a mill-race. I say
That night diminished my trust in stone—
As porous as a sponge, where once I'd seen
The image of a constancy, a ground for the play
And fluency of light. That night diminished
Yet did not quite betray my trust.
For the walls held. As we tried to sleep,
And sometimes did, we knew that the flood
Rivered ten feet beneath us. And so we hung
Between a dream of fear and the very thing.
Water-lights coursed the brain and sound
Turned it to the tympanum of an ear. When I rose
The rain had ceased. Full morning
Floated and raced with water through the house,
Dancing in whorls on every ceiling
As I advanced. Sheer foolishness
It seemed to pause and praise the shimmer
And yet I did and called you down
To share this vertigo of sunbeams everywhere,
As if no surface were safe from swaying
And the very stone were as malleable as clay.
Primeval light undated the day
Back into origin, washed past stain
And staleness, to a beginning glimmer
That stilled one's beating ear to sound
Until the flood-water seemed to stream
With no more burden than the gleam itself.
Light stilled the mind, then showed it what to do
Where the work of an hour or two could
Hack a bank-side down, let through
The stream and thus stem half the force
That carried its weight and water out of course.
Strength spent, we returned. By night
The house was safe once more, but cold within.
The voice of waters burrowed one's dream
Of ending in a wreck of walls:
We were still here, with too much to begin
That work might make half-good.
We waited upon the weather's mercies
And the December stars frosted above the flood.

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Severnside

We looked for the tide, for the full river
  Riding up the expanse to the further cliff:
But its bed lay bare—sand
  That a brisk wind planed towards us.
Perpetual shore it seemed, stretch
  And invitation to all we could see and more:
Hard to think of it as the thoroughfare for shoals:
  At the edge, a cracked mosaic of mud,
Even shards of it dried in the sunny wind—
  A wind whose tidal sound mocked tidelessness,
Mocked, too, the grounded barges grass now occupied
  Dense on the silt-filled holds. Sad,
But a glance told you that land had won,
  That we would see no swell today
Impelled off the Atlantic, shelving
  And channeling riverwards in the hour we had.
And so we turned, and the wind possessed our ears,
  Mocked on, and our talk turned, too,
Mind running on future things,
  Null to all save the blind pull of muscle
In a relegated present. When we paused
  The sands were covered and the channels full:
We had attended the wind too long, robbed
  Of distinction between the thing it was
And what it imitated. But the rise we stood on,
  Reawakening our eyes, gave back suddenly
More than the good that we had forfeited:
  Ahead—below—we could sight now
The present, as it were, spread to futurity
  And up the river's bend and bed
The waters travelling, a prow of light
  Pushing the foam before them in its onrush
Over the waiting sand. And we who seemed
  To be surfing forward on that white
Knew that we only dreamed of standing still
  Here where a tide whose coming we had missed
Rode massed before us in the filled divide.

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In the Estuary

This is the way it goes, the tide:
  A stain through the water, a first sign
That the light is getting down to layers
  Under the flowing surface: then
Colour brought up out of the depths
  To reveal suddenly a ledge of sand
Turning into a glassy island that reflects
  The further shore. The swimming birds
Are left standing, and walk to and fro
  Across their mirrored landscape, each
Accompanying its own white reflection.
  The channel shallowing, two rocks
(To begin with) and then a chain
  Of rock on rock, space out an archipelago
Of islets before the continental mass
  Which was the sand. You could not map
This making and unmaking. Every gap
  Is losing water. Every rise
Tussocked with grass that greens and fattens
  In the tidal flow, shows now
As an inland island above mudflats
  Through which the veins of channels hurry-off
What's left of the river from its bed.
  Reading the weather from such skies—
Cloud promise and cloud countermand—
  As cover this searun neither sea nor land,
You end in contraries like the bight itself,
  Where an unseen moon is pulling the place from focus
And the lunar ripple runs woven with the sunlight.

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The Epilogue

It was a dream delivered the epilogue:
  I saw the world end: I saw
Myself and you, tenacious and exposed,
  Smallest insects on the largest leaf:
A high trail coasted a ravine
  Eyes could not penetrate because a wood
Hung down its slope: a fugue of water
  Startled the ear and air with distances
Around and under us, as if a flood
  Came pouring in from every quarter:
Our trail and height failed suddenly,
  Fell sheer away into a visibility
More terrible than what the trees might hide:
  Fed by a fall, wide, rising
Was it a sea? claimed all the plain
  And climbed towards us, smooth
And ungainsayable. We turned and knew now
  That no law steadied a sliding world,
For what we saw was an advancing wave
  Cresting along the height. An elate
Despair held us together silent there
  Waiting for that wall to fall and bury
Us and the love that taught us to forget
  To fear it. I woke then to this room
Where first I heard the sounds that dogged that dream,
  Caught back from epilogue to epilogue.

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LANE DUNLOP

The Catalogue of Childhood Memories

In memory of Anna Marvin Dunlop, 1880–1980.

THE LADY WHO ALWAYS LEANED OUT OF THE WINDOW of the apartment house at the corner of Middagh and Willow and promised to give us an agate marble if we would go play somewhere else. The long, curving shots made in hopeful calculation of the street's incline toward the curb, that would sometimes thrillingly hit another player's marble that was too far ahead to get with a conventional straight shot. Each kid had his own marble collection, shrewdly replenished by conquest, trades for valuable marbles, or five cent bags of "regulars." An agate marble would have been a prized "shooter," the marble you habitually led off with. There were also "Jumbos," not many, which you resorted to when you wanted to hit several marbles at a shot. They kept their trajectory longer than a regular, but were more easily hit themselves because of their size. You ventured one when you'd lost a lot of regulars, and were willing to sacrifice a king to win back some troops. Our greediness for an "aggie" made us believe the lady in the window for a long time. She was always going to "get it tomorrow" for us. But finally we saw through her, and cynically played to our hearts' content under her nose.

The time when I was perhaps four or five and took half a bottle of aspirin in the course of an afternoon. I had a headache, and my mother called to me from the living room: "Take an aspirin and a glass of water when you go to the bathroom." This I did, and the full glass of water that I dutifully drank of course made me go again every twenty minutes. There were no ill effects, and I trace my lifelong trust in aspirin to this incident.

The time we were all coming out of church, and somebody was saying how no-one had ever actually seen God. "I've seen him," I solemnly announced. I thought he was the minister. I also imagined him as being my grandfather in a long black gown. To this day, the word "Easter" means nothing so much to me as the taste

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of the egg-shaped jelly beans (especially the lavender and white translucent ones) that we ate on that day alone.

The slatternly substitute for Millie, our regular Jamaican day maid, who drank on the job and once held me clear out the kitchen window three storeys up from the concrete backyard. I politely admired the view, but I do believe it was in her mind to drop me. The other window incident, in my bedroom, when a pile of books I was standing on to reach the curtain rod collapsed and I momentarily dangled above the street in the window frame. The scar from the cut I got on my knee as it went through the window pane, along with the big brown island of a birthmark (shaped like Madagascar) on my left thigh, made me shy for years about wearing short pants or swim trunks.

My first notion of the soul: my mother was standing at the window looking out into the light over the street and saying: "It's like a sword in you, which if you're good is all bright and gleaming and pure, and if you're not it's all muddy and filthy."

The tiny Dutch dime which fitted exactly into the cavity left by a sunken nailhead in my bureau drawer and which I polished assiduously with a pencil eraser that tightly went around in the hole. The pious little profile of the Dutch queen, with her upswept pre-World War One hairdo, permanently displayed on the heads of the coin which there was no flipping over or prying out once it was in.

Some prices from my childhood: eight cents for a small loaf of bread, twelve for a big loaf. Milk was eleven cents a quart. Ice cream was a nickel a cone (my favorite flavor was vanilla). The time I found thirty-seven cents in silver, nickel and copper scattered in the slush on the sidewalk up on Willow Street. Millie and my brother Jock simply laughed me off when I got back. I couldn't possibly have found so much, someone must have given it to me. The fifty cent piece I found on the beach at Point O' Woods, gleaming washed and bright at the foot of a sandcliff almost as tall as myself. It was a gray, stormy day: hurricane weather.

When the Squibb factory, around the corner and down the first block of Everit Street towards the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge, let out, most of the workers (most of them women, it being wartime) started home along our block of Middagh Street. The setting sun shone all along the street, immersing the departing workers in an elegiac glow.

The naive fervor with which I asked a young man from our

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street, back on furlough, whether he'd killed any Japanese. "Well, yeah, I guess I have killed me a few," he replied with a foolish, flattered grin.

The time I saw a cat get run over at the corner of Middagh and Willow: a long, startling arc of blood that splashed down onto the sidewalk. The annihilated, oblivious, stiffening form of the cat, squashed flat against the pavement. The calm of the summer afternoon slowly settling back into place, the stomach untightening.

The man with a nosebleed who asked me to hold one of his bags of groceries while he fished for a handkerchief. I backed off, frightened. That was at the northeast corner of Middagh and Willow, and I believe he lived in the house on that corner. It is still there, while our house was knocked down to make way for the highway that curves around the end of the Heights toward the Bridge. Ours and the block of Poplar Street behind us were not architecturally noteworthy enough to be preserved. Did our family tend to reside in doomed or at least expendable areas? When a highway was being talked about for Fire Island, it was said that only one house in Point O' Woods would have to go. Ours.

My first metaphor: my father's parents were driving with my brother and me in the mountains. To our left, a sea of mountains, like stilled billows, stretched away into the distance. "They look like waves," I insisted. My grandmother chuckled comfortably and affectionately at my nonsensical words.

My other grandmother (Ann Lane Rogers, who lived on the Heights on Remsen Street, which defined one end of the oblong rectangle that was my early world. Its borders were Middagh Street at our end, with Hicks Street and Columbia Heights as the long sides). Her "sick headaches" used to impose silence all through the three storey house at 18 Remsen. Everyone went softly for days.

The way Montague Street used to continue on down to the waterfront, as a cobblestone road that passed under the Penny Bridge. It must have cost a penny to cross it at one time. The road was the last evidence of how the Heights had come into being, as an elegant new neighborhood for the merchants whose businesses and warehouses lined the waterfront along the base of the long, steep-sided hill. After breakfast, they must have strolled down their long, steep lawns or along pleasant paths, or ridden down to work. The channel between Brooklyn and the nearest island in the harbor was once called Buttermilk Channel, from the dairy on the is-

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land that supplied the neighborhood. Attentiveness to traces of the original countryside, the way it once was.

My grandfather's father had had his business, a rare lumber yard, down on the waterfront and lived up on the Heights. He paid his men personally each Saturday. The wage for the six day week was eight dollars, in gold and silver.

My grandfather spoke with the old Brooklyn accent, which originally was an upperclass accent. He pronounced "pearl" "poil," and "oil" "earl." Son of a Princeton man, he was Yale '01, Phi Beta Kappa.

Two early appearances in print: once in a photograph on the front page of the Herald Tribune, of cottagers fleeing the hurricane to come on the Point O' Woods ferry (1944), once in a Brooklyn Eagle photograph of schoolchildren on a class outing on the new Promenade on the Heights.

Two Chinese carved peach pits, which my grandmother gave me and which I later dropped out the window with the feeling that now I had done something really unforgivable. The fragrant cedar box, a relic of the early family business, which my grandfather gave me. His story of being off the coast of Cuba, where he'd gone on a rare lumber-buying trip for his father in the early years of the century, and where even at sea it was so hot that "your wrists sweated." His stories of requisitioning mahogany in Florida for the U.S. Government, for use as airplane propellers during World War I. His reading "The Night Before Christmas" every Christmas Eve, from the same book that he'd read from to my mother when she was a child, a tale I will always hear in his cultured Brooklyn voice.

My mother telling me about the only lie she ever told. She hid another child's coveted tin soldier in the sand under the boardwalk of her parents' house at Point O' Woods, and when asked by her father said she didn't know where it was. My grandfather's story about seeing an old ship's timber protruding from a dune way in from the beach at Point O' Woods, and saying to himself: "Where the sea has been, the sea will be again." Early fondness for proverbial language.

My mother's parents' house at Point O' Woods burned down in the early '30s, becoming one of the lost ancestral sites, a modest, sandy pit carpeted with beach heather which I was always aware of as I went by it on my bicycle. My other grandparents still had their cottage, but only came down in September after the summer tenants. My yearning eagerness as an outsider to be friends with

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the tanned kids who'd been there all summer. My mother and father had met each other at Point O' Woods, a summer romance that was soon to encounter the economic winter of the Depression. My father, who was to have become a vice-president of the John Dunlop and Sons Silk Company, a concern that in its heyday had seven factories with headquarters on Fourth Avenue, had to take a job as manager of a Western Union station and smoked seaweed in his pipe to save on tobacco (a joke, but he did it). The permanent emotional crimp induced by hard times.

The family stories and anecdotes which, even if I hadn't heard them yet, were filtering down into my unconscious through ways of being that had partly been formed by, had partly made for such experiences. My grandfather, my father's father, the honest capitalist, who paid his men back what they had paid for his now worthless company stock. He was not required by law to do so. His forbear, the Scotch abolitionist in pro-Confederate Texas, who drove his herd across the border, converted it into Mexican gold and sailed north with a ship full of cotton to the cotton-starved North, setting up the family silk company on the profit. An officer in the United States Army, on what was then the frontier of East Texas, he'd lived in the same boarding-house as Robert E. Lee, a fellow officer who survives in family anecdote as stepping into his friend's quarters and saying to his children: "Now, boys, I want you to divide this apple exactly equally." After he'd come North, there was a consultation in Washington with President Lincoln, who said: "Dunlop, I want you to separate Texas from the Confederacy." This grandiose-sounding project, which would have meant sailing down the Mississippi and talking to influential landowners in Texas, was made unnecessary by the end of the war. While still in Texas, he'd been friends with an Apache chief, who very much wanted a rifle he had and was always trying to trade for it. Whenever he saw him, he would say: "I had a dream. I dreamed you gave me the rifle for these beads," or whatever he had to offer for it. Finally, just before leaving Texas to avoid having his property confiscated by rebel sympathizers, my ancestor gave his Indian friend the rifle for some beadwork. Thanking him, the chief gravely commented: "I dreamed, and my dream came true. One should dream often." The beadwork was in my grandmother's attic in Spring Valley until a few years ago. Another, debunking version of its provenance has my ancestor finding it left behind by an Indian campfire on a cavalry foray. The Scotch forbear who me-

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thodically chopped a hole in the ice of the local pond for his morning dip before wending his way home to his breakfast porridge. This he did every winter day in the village of Dunlop, in Ayrshire. Spring Valley, where the Dunlops settled after the Civil War, was by the turn of the century a Dunlop company town. They had the town's one industry, a silk mill (the building still stands), owned the waterworks and the town's only bank. They also founded the town of Mahwah in New Jersey, laying out the new streets on family property and naming many of them with family names. A memory of past prosperity, diminished when Jno. Dunlop & Sons went under in The Crash, may have had a psychological fallout on us all. In another, less self-conscious age, such a memory might have predisposed a sensitive man to a belief in the Fall of Man. Spring Valley sprang up around the newly laid railroad. In a poem about The Fall, I wrote these lines about Eve and the serpent in the garden:

> Eve stood at gaze at his limbless guise
> In August that seemed to have no end,
>
> Familiar as a room: the sky's blue roof
> Cloud-raftered, was a sufficient ceiling . . .
>
> . . . Faith began with Cherubims
>
> And the sound of a going in the trees'
> Green applause; locust's cry of famine,

These lines are a memory of walks in late August along the railroad cut when my brother and I were staying at my grandparents' after camp and before we went down to the seashore:

> The sea, endlessly rehearsing the end
> Of all flesh, was yet to be heard from.

The Japanese silk delegation that visited the Spring Valley mill in the '20s and presented my grandfather with some ornamental sword hilts, which I used to look at when I was up there.

The way in which most of our family anecdotes tend to center on a telling line, of slightly memorable speech that arises unrehearsed out of ordinary everyday living. Without malice, and with

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a modest verbal humor, as in being amused by the solecisms of George (my grandparents' gardener for many years), his way of always saying "in the neck of time," without trying to correct him. My grandmother was a farmgirl from Baldwinsville in upstate New York who met my grandfather when she came down to Spring Valley as a schoolteacher. If Tess of the D'Urbervilles were real and alive today, she would be about my grandmother's age. To hear my grandmother speak, about her flowers, say, was to know what native American speech was like before its sources were fouled by latter-day Latinate jargon. "Ordinary working people," as my father used to call them with approval in his voice, spoke a better English—clearer, more concise and colorful, closer to life—than most of us do today. That also went into my make-up.

Sitting on the stoop on Middagh Street and reading a long fairy tale about not brownies but some beings closer to children, so that it seemed quite realistic, who lived safely in a summer forest and possessed a crystal ball that may have been a big drop of dew. A long early dream, the first I ever had in color, about living with the fairies in a deep forest (possibly influenced by the illustrations of Sherwood Forest in *Robin Hood*, although I think that was later), and not wanting at all to leave them, which was the same as waking up.

The shellacked French travel poster, from my parents' honeymoon, which hung in my bedroom for many years, of an open bus touring the ochre-colored promontories of the Côte d'Azur. I always thought I could see the bosom and features, somewhat askew, of a reclining lady in the lines and shadings of one of the headlands.

Early fascination with coins. The handful of foreign coins brought back from my parents' honeymoon that started my collection. The allegorical figure of a woman standing by a throne like an ancient Roman chair on the big nickel lira piece. The seated allegorical lady on the brass franc piece. A peasant woman with a sun hat on the Austrian schilling piece, and the symmetrically bladed head of wheat on a German ten pfennig piece. The axe-bladed fasces on the back of the Mussolini nickel.

The only period I have been entirely free of a stutter: between the ages of six and twelve. The year or so of stuttering before I entered grade school is too far back for me to analyze or even guess at. The stutter that set in again after twelve, slowly worsening until for a couple of years I was almost completely tongue-tied, desper-

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ately clowning in class to avoid being called on, dreading for weeks in advance the "oral reports," my heart thumping, palms sweating if I had to address a teacher, with a "recitation trauma" such that even now I could never speak to an audience of any size unless I were able to choose my words (the stutterer's bête noire is the text from which he cannot depart, where the words that he cannot pronounce and cannot get around loom up ahead), is precisely assignable to a very happy unrequited love affair with a cool, amused little girl after camp had closed and my brother and I were staying an extra two weeks with the director's family. Her name was Jannie Sherrier, and she was a friend of the camp director's daughter. I remember walking through some tall grass, hearing the high-pitched, hysterical winding-down drone of a cicada or some such insect, and thinking to myself: "I'm in love with Jannie." I never saw her again after that end of summer. Another reason, perhaps, why I associated the weather of Eden with late August in my poem, and why I included a "locust's cry of famine" in it.

Our railroad flat on Middagh Street looked out on the respectable Heights that began properly on the other side of or down the next block of the street. There was where the old houses were, the Greek Revival house at the corner of Middagh and Willow, and the even earlier Federal Style clapboard house across from it, that were to save their respective blocks from being torn down for the highway that ours made way for. The neighbors on Middagh Street whom I remember were mostly Irish, Italian, a Jewish family called Strum who lived next door and whose baby, not that it was particularly naughty but because I was just old enough to be ashamed of being compared to a baby, I was always told not to be like ("You're just like Baby Strum") when I misbehaved, and the Manfrum brothers who lived in the next house and who hired themselves out as chauffeurs. You always saw them leaving or coming back in their black livery. In back, we faced the rears of the Irish-Italian tenements of Poplar Street on the slope that led to the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge. There was a feeling of not quite belonging to either world. I always felt slightly out of place, not fully entitled to be there, when I visited my friends who had more well-to-do parents, in their houses, and once in the house of Joey, the Italian kid who lived at 1 Middagh, there was a definite sense of degradation when we were wrestling on the floor and he deliberately drooled spit down the back of my neck. Also from the dirty play with the Poplar Street kids, winter mornings spent throwing

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tar-covered rocks into the East River where the cobblestones of Fulton Street ended in a detritus of slimy, jagged broken rock. Middagh Street was a boundary of the Heights as I knew it, but it was not a wealthy border like Remsen Street at the other end, where my grandparents lived.

Words which even now are freighted with a certain cargo of childhood memories: "rooked," "thwarted," "Shame!," "obligated." Phrases: "I'm not arguing with you." "Life's too short." "Chuck it." "Is that good?"

The gorgeous bonfires of Christmas trees in a vacant lot at the corner of Everit and Doughty Street at the foot of the Heights. The warehouses on Furman Street, with their black iron shutters and star-shaped girder ends. The railroad along the waterfront, where my father took me one Sunday morning and got me a ride in the cab of the locomotive. The row of dingy storefronts and rooms with half-drawn shades in the windows over them, along the foot of Fulton Street, bleak as an Edward Hopper painting. The fog up from the river that filled the neighborhood with the mournful hoots and long drawn-out bellows of ships' horns. The fire on one of the old wooden piers that filled the neighborhood with mysterious smoke. The gaps between the houses on Columbia Heights, the last remaining patches of the original countryside, that reached all the way down to Furman Street on the waterfront. The small gray clapboard house on Everit Street (which at the top of the hill became Columbia Heights), surviving wedged between the factory buildings of the Squibb Company. Its yard, which was forty or fifty feet deeper than the house itself because of the ground being cut away for the foundation of the factory, had an ailanthus tree whose top was barely level with the sidewalk. Image of a cramped, dwarfed life struggling up to the surface, its full effort spent before the rest of life begins. The jagged cracks and loosened bricks in the old Friends Meeting House at the corner of Hicks and Orange, and how strange it seemed when someone said "The frost did that." The narrow, lush old lawn over towards Remsen Street that was a private playground. My mother wore white gloves when she went to apply to the old lady who owned it for us to play there. The dark brown pods with their seeds rattling inside them, not interesting enough to collect, but interesting, that fell off some kind of tree on Columbia Heights. The mica-glittering slabs of the old sidewalk on Cranberry Street between Willow Street and Columbia Heights. The lonely-looking naked light bulb, dangling in the

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back room of a house on Cranberry Street, seen across the backyards of Willow Street, from my bedroom window one summer night.

The way a child takes things literally. My brother, overhearing my grandmother say "Jock needs more iron," starting to gnaw on some rusty nails. My mother, when she was told by her mother that a certain building was an eyesore, looking at it solemnly and saying "It doesn't make *my* eyes sore." Walking over to the ocean at Point O' Woods with the maid, being passed by a lady who told us "There's no sea today," and my surprise upon seeing that it was still there after all.

The Sunday night drives, always in near total silence, always with the same seating order (my father at the wheel, my mother beside him, my older brother on the left in the back and me beside him), through unfamiliar neighborhoods or around or through Prospect Park. My legs chafed by the cold, stiff wool of my trousers. Dreading the hot bath that would make them smart and ache at home.

The coal chutes that were let in through basement windows, and the black, clattering cascade that sluiced down them. The ice-delivery trucks in summer. The Pilgrim Laundry trucks, with the picture of a Pilgrim standing on a rocky coast and a surf-swirled boulder a few yards offshore which I always thought the Pilgrim had just hurled there.

Brooklyn, that humble, deprived borough, always with its memories of a better, more fortunate past. The Heights Casino, on Montague Street, so fashionable in the '20s that "girls came over from New York to have their coming out parties there." Prospect Park, donated to the city when it was still country by its owners, some of whose descendants lived on the Heights (friends of my grandparents). "The tallest hill in Brooklyn," which we climbed once, to find a few twittering sparrows foraging for the seeds of small dead-looking bushes in the snow. My grandparents' first house and my mother's godmother's house, engulfed in vast slums like another country. Once a city. Birthplace of a native American melancholy.

The reason why "Champ" was so famous. The reason was that "Champ," a saturnine Italian kid who lived in the little slum behind us on Poplar Street and who always went around in a cast-off black overcoat of his big brother or his father that came down to his ankles, had earned his nickname by taunting a policeman with

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a curseword. This feat, which probably had been accomplished at a safe distance of at least half a block and by running for it, ensured him a local fame (along two or three blocks of Middagh and Poplar) and enhanced his position as a ringleader of the Poplar Street gang, for years. It took real daring for a kid of my time to have done this. Not that the cop would have bothered to chase him, but that he would have been brought up strictly enough to fear punishment. At the same time, the nature of his exploit stamped him indelibly as a member of the lower orders—even in a child's mind.

Christmas dinner at my grandparents'. The hand-curled scallops of butter, in the basement dining room at 18 Remsen. My grandmother's fondness for plebeian mashed turnips, which I have inherited. My dread of appearing at her table with even a speck of dirt under my fingernails. The finger bowls, of old, air-bubbly glass set forth on antique lace doilies that were always dutifully commented on, never used but always ritualistically transferred to a spot slightly beyond and to the left of one's place setting. The plum pudding, on a round silver platter and lapped in meager gas-colored flames tipped with red. The little metal-leaved tree, always in its place at the center of the table. The conversation, which nearly always flowed along certain predetermined channels. The real head of the table was where my grandmother sat. One awful Christmas afternoon, when I had put my knee though the window of a grandfather clock that had been covered with a cloth and laid on its back on a window seat, and was aware of her frigid, although politely not touched on, displeasure. I was brought up to have good manners. Once, everyone sat around as I undid a nest of boxes, each elaborately wrapped, with polite exclamations of surprise at each smaller box until the last one with my present inside it: an old shoe of my grandfather's. "Oh, it's just what I wanted!"

One of the things I often overheard my mother say (probably I was meant to hear it) and believed about myself: "Lane's always very nice when something's been done for him. But ask him to do something . . . " A docile child will form his opinion of himself from what he hears others say about him. Later on, it becomes an emotional strait jacket binding the adult all the more firmly because there was real love mixed in with the original censure. A love born of emotional kinship.

The good-humored contempt with which various inferior races, nationalities and creeds were systematically raked over the coals at

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Christmas dinner. Irish (almost invariably prefixed with the damning epithet "lace curtain"), Jews ("But there are some fine old Jewish names, like Margolies," my grandfather would say. "They've been in business in New York for over a century.") and Catholics (Negroes were apparently beneath comment, or so inured to their lot as not to need putting down). An anti-Catholic joke, which I am afraid may have conditioned me forever: a little Protestant girl wanders into a Catholic church and tells her father about it when she gets home. "What did you see?" "Well, there was a man in a long white dress standing in front of the altar and swinging a little bowl with smoke coming out of it. And he sang" (lightly intoning the words): " 'I can beat any son of a bitch at dominoes . . . ' And there was a boy in a white dress standing behind him, and he swung his little bowl, and sang" (again intoning): " 'You bet your sweet ass you can . . . ' " The succession of unreliable Filipino maids who inhabited the cell-like servant's room behind the kitchen.

The joy of leaving the city for the country, with our other grandparents. Turning into Central Park one winter night, in a Lincoln Zephyr gravely piloted by my grandfather, and looking at the ice-glazed granite blocks of the driveway wall go by, a delicious promise of a long drive ahead in country darkness ending in a warm bed.

As a city boy, I was slightly afraid of the dark. I used to imagine that a swaying fir tree outside my bedroom window in my grandparents' house in the country was a gardener hunched over reading a bible to himself. I did not have nightmares, but difficulty falling asleep for thinking of the serial thrillers that my brother and I listened to on the tall radio that stood in a corner of the living room downstairs, serials in which something frighteningly wrong would occur in the very first episode (a couple driving a rented car out into the country would discover a bloodstain on the dashboard, a sinister black pearl would be slipped into the purse of a woman vacationing with friends in Hong Kong, a man would turn into a little pile of dust when he sat down on an evil sofa). Once I screamed out, and my grandfather appeared in the doorway of my bedroom, uttering one of his grave, kindly formulas of disapprobation: "Why, Lane, I'm *surprised* at you." This shamed me into falling asleep.

My grandfather Rogers' favorite *New Yorker* cartoon, quoted at more than one Christmas dinner: the little girl at the table, telling

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her parents: "I say it's spinach, and the hell with it!" Might this have been an oblique comment on the mashed turnips that always appeared on the table?

Putting my head against the stomach of my father in a soft yellow cashmere sweater one night as he was coming around the front of the car after we'd all gotten back from the country, and asking him why we couldn't live there. He put his hand on my shoulder, but didn't answer. A sense of being bound by unexplained, unspoken conditions.

Some clear sense impressions. Going out with my grandfather Rogers one summer morning with a pair of old gloves and a glass jar to remove Japanese beetles from the rose bushes. The green-gold-backed beetles slowly filling the whole jar, and my disappointment when it was filled so soon. I must have taken the gloves off at some point, because I remember parting the yellow rose petals with my bare fingers and the crisp, solid little feel of the unresisting insects as I took them out. This is my only clear memory of Waccabuc, where the Rogers' summer house was after the one at Point O' Woods burned down. Going minnowing with my brother Jock in the morning to have bait for fishing in the afternoon off the pier at Point O' Woods. Usually we'd go in the bay at the end of the walk that led past our house from the main walk. Wading at either end of an old, patched net with crooked long handles of ironwood, the thrill and satisfaction of bringing up a whole school of minnows at a single drag. Other, unwanted little fishes, such as the gray, blunt, darting ones called mummy-fish, we threw back. Any minnows that survived in the pail by the time we got down to the dock were set free as a reward. Fishing for snappers all afternoon off the end of the pier. None of the other kids did it. Jock always had the best position, the round seat of the mooring post at the corner of the pier where the current swirled a little. I was allowed to fish anywhere else along the long-ended pier, usually from the next mooring post. The excitement of the bobber skidding along the surface in a series of sharp, definite little tugs that could not just be choppy water, and the thrill when it went right under. Jerking the fish out of the water in one clear arc that landed it on the hot, gray, weathered boards of the dock. The whitish-silver bellies and blackish-blue backs of the snappers (baby bluefish). Breaking the fish's neck. The occasional anomalous sand eel (which we called a "guild eel") that came up on the line suspiciously lightly. Weakfish and blowfish, all thrown back.

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Books I read as a child at Point O' Woods: Bomba The Jungle Boy, Uncle Wiggily (an absent-minded, avuncular rabbit who had a separate adventure in each chapter, which always ended with some such words as: "Now, if the chambermaid doesn't pour ink into the tea instead of cream, and if the fire-tongs don't elope with the scuttle, in the next chapter I'll tell you what happened when Uncle Wiggily . . . "), Doctor Doolittle (looking, with his animals, just as innocent as they in the author's illustrations), Little Black Sambo (of which I remember the red and white checkered tablecloth, the watermelon, and the pool of butter that the tiger melted into when he ran faster and faster around the tree), The Water Babies.

The places I lived in as a child (Spring Valley, Point O' Woods, Brooklyn Heights, Clinton Hill) were either being infiltrated or surrounded (in two instances actually engulfed) by a rising tide of egalitarian vulgarity and/or squalor. This, in a family where the money and dominating personalities (however kindly and loving) lay one generation back, like shade trees that my parents lived under, must have had its psychological effects on me. For example, where did I get the idea that all that pleasantness would continue with no effort on my part? Also, a longing for the past and love of its memories (as evidenced in this piece).

My first lies. Why did I tell them? My stealing a nickel from my brother, hiding it under some towels in a bureau drawer, and then doggedly denying it as my grandfather, knowing perfectly well that I had taken it, patiently interrogated me. That was the first lie I remember telling, and like my mother's it was told at Point O' Woods, but unlike hers there was not the extenuation of wanting the thing stolen. Also, her lie was the only one she ever told.

Early hints of alienation. Abruptly resentful of all the other happy children at a lawn party up the street on Summit Avenue, where my grandparents lived in Spring Valley, I walked away from it. When I got back to our house, with its green shutters and windows open to the calm summer heat, it seemed mutely judgmental, as if I didn't belong there, didn't deserve to be there. The vicious swipe with a rusty spike, laying his forehead open, that I took at a boy at camp who had torn up my drawing of a castle. The knowledge of this act, among counsellors and campers, that followed me down through the next five or six summers at that camp and would be brought up and held against me, like a kind of original sin or Cain-like attack.

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Amuletic property of certain names. Each evoked a complete set of feelings or excitement. Spring Valley. Point O' Woods. Boston Red Sox (my brother wanted to get me off the Brooklyn Dodgers, which he considered "his" team, and so one day during spring vacation at Spring Valley, he said as we were looking at the scores of exhibition games: "Why don't you root for some other team? Why don't you root for the Red Sox?" The name percolated like magic in my brain, and by the fall, when they lost to the Cardinals in the '46 Series, I was a full-fledged fanatic. Almost every year after that, until I was an adolescent, the rich, powerful Red Sox, "the best team on paper," slow-starting but coming on awesomely in August, ahead when they came into Yankee Stadium to lose the last two games of the season, each with its legendary heartbreaker of a bad break—Johnny Pesky hesitating on third, unable to score as a ball momentarily obscured by a dust cloud dropped into right field for a single—put on a throat-constricting rise and shortfall that was most of my emotional life. Each winter, there would be the same Christmas card of a star above a country church spire from my grandfather Rogers, with a caustic note advising me to root for a team that didn't "choke so easily").

The obedient child, credulous not because he is stupid but because he trusts others and believes what they tell him, tutored in frugality by a family whose best times are behind it and taught by his own stutter to think he will have to take a lonely job that can be done without speaking (later, this becomes the idea of writing), will be the unambitious adult artist, the closet citizen, the nostalgic neurotic.

Early love for the sound of the wind, the sound of a going in the tops of the ironwood and scrub oak trees that were not much higher than the seven screened windows of the sleeping porch at Point O' Woods, open all night, for the sighing, intermitted breathing of the sea behind it.

Sounds of deep security. The train whistle at Spring Valley, heard at suppertime in summer from the screened-in dining porch, surrounded by the friendly presences like family retainers of tall old bushes, humble green lawn and sheltering trees. The hoarse klaxon of the village fire horn, that reduced my grandfather's English setters to helpless whimpering, like some necessary but kindly punishment. The quiet whirr of the lawn mower, the dew-wet blades of the grass clinging to the slender, curving blades of the cylinder polished by this modest exercise. The exciting "plop!" of

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the Herald Tribune as it landed on the herringbone bricks of the little rose arbor that framed the street-facing door, when I had come downstairs before breakfast to find out what the Red Sox had done. The sound of the word "America," as heard on the radio or in my grandfather's conversation. Also called "the country," it dealt wisely with the rest of the world and brooked no misbehavior. The murmuring sound of the railroad brook, that flowed on either side of the track-bed upstream towards Monsey and that was so pure that my grandmother once told us to bring back some water-cress from it. The sound of the lazy August breeze stirring the tops of the old trees at the top of the tall bank of the railroad cut, where my grandfather's father's first house had been. Snowed in by the blizzard of '88, his family had lived on a barrel of oatmeal. That was when it was really country around there. The droning, plangent timbre of the Reverend Wyckopf, at the Dutch Reformed Church, and the number of times he said "I hope you will bear in mind . . . ," amusedly counted up by Jo, a Welsh woman who was almost like one of the family from having been a governess for my father, his brother and sisters, during Sunday service. My grandmother's favorite sentence-starter, "Now, dear . . . " The soft, welling water-balls of sound of running the water for a bath, and the discreet, subdued gurgling as it drained off. The companionable creak, underfoot, of the wide, curving, balustered staircase.

The bleached, gritty, worn fragments of shells and crab cases that you found in the middle of the island, bits of evidence of the sea's old breakthroughs. The morsels of glass, frosted by the sea's action and as much its products now as shells and stones, offered at low tide and withdrawn at high tide for further grinding: pharmaceutical red, blue and dark brown, pale green of wine bottles, even ordinary white glass like a kind of jewelry. The translucent, almost transparent quartz pebbles. Looking for "lucky-shells," the pure white ones, perhaps one in fifty, their natural brown worn away, the luckiest of all, on the long stretch of empty beach between Point O' Woods and Cherry Grove, afternoon after afternoon. The sea gave, and the sea took away. The salt lick of the sea.

The moment of surprise on the sidewalk on Middagh, when I hit Joey back. Used to years of easy bullying, he went down on his backside with an expression of stupid astonishment. Years later, I was to become a neurotic bully at camp, a tongue-tied captain of

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teams who feared above all things having to get up and lead a cheer for the other side in the wigwam or messhall.

The pebble-smooth cakes of soap, lost or abandoned by improvident juniors, floating stilly on the darkening surface of the lake after the "evening dip." Sneaking through the undergrowth on the slope between the director's cottage and the lake of an afternoon, during the camp's rest hour, to get birch beer at a stand in the woods. Hunting for salamanders after rain. Reddish orange and flecked with black, slow of foot, soft, delicate and vulnerable (how did they survive?), they frequented the pine-needle carpeted clearings bordered with ground pine in the woods behind the tall old basketball backboard in back of the big T-shaped cabin known as "the castle." The intricate network of channels we built on the bare hard slopes under unused cabins (the camp was slowly closing down), all for the moment when a bucketful of water was poured into it at the top. Whole swim periods spent diving for tiny quartz pebbles at the bottom of the "crib," kept in a hook tin. Putting my nose to an old telephone pole one hot noontime and smelling the seashore in the mountains. Trolling for pickerel after supper with the bowl of an old teaspoon outfitted with hooks, the excitement of a strike and the long, arduous reeling in. The pitch darkness of the lake, broken only by the faint "crack!" of a raccoon smashing mussel shells on a rock across the lake for its supper. The lines left out overnight from the diving board of the senior pier, which always meant eels for breakfast. The ancient catfish, the color of gray pus and with a couple of hook leaders sticking out among its whiskers, basking in a sun-warmed shallow by an old log, that I saw once from the back of a rowboat. The spokes of clustered water-rays that you always seemed to see when you looked down into the lake from the side of the boat. The winding, shaly passage, barely deep enough for a kayak, between the settled shores of the Little Lake and the wild shores, low-lying with distance, of the Big Lake. Dead Man's Cove, its water reddened by some kind of lakeweed. The nests of sunfish, vague rings of lake sand fanned up by their tails, skittishly patrolled by solemn, wary, easily scared away but always coming back, wall-eyed parent fish.

Echoes of the war at camp. The rationing books that you had to take to the mess hall for every meal. The Pennsylvania Dutch farmboy counsellor (his name was Rapp), the camp bugler, overheard one day saying to another counsellor: "I'd like to get over

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there and kill me some Japs." The V-J Day bonfire, at night on the big flat playing field, carpeted in its remoter part toward the woods by patches of velvety moss, wild strawberry plants and sparse clumps of tall grass.

Memories of the big flat playing field. The grayish, almost ground-colored grasshoppers, which you could spot only by looking closely where they must have landed after their short parabolic flights on wings lined with black and edged with dusty yellow. The risky fun of shooting an arrow almost straight up into the air and, after a long moment, the swift "shuck!" as it plunged into the hard, pebbly earth. The game of "Steal The Flag," in which by a kind of freakish accident I managed to steal the flag (actually an old toilet plunger), from under the noses of a ring of vigilant seniors, three times. This earned me a campwide fame, and was cited for summers afterward as proof of what a lowly junior could do if he just kept on trying.

Both our camps were in the then remote Poconos, and my brother and I were the only campers from Brooklyn all those summers. The second camp we went to (after the first had closed) was run by a retired English teacher, many of whose counsellors were friends from the Philadelphia school system. Fond of polysyllabic humor, he ruefully tolerated a song about his abnormal fatness (perhaps he made it up himself) sung regularly down in the wigwam. Once, at flag-lowering after supper, he made the following announcement: "Will the junior who left a bifurcated garment down at the lake please claim it in the office?" The air of calm rightness of the flag as, fluttering slightly in a breeze of its own making, it was respectfully lowered and properly folded. Church services were conducted from the porch of a shaggy cedar-barked cottage, with the campers sitting on benches lined up on the front lawn. My head supposedly bowed in prayer, I looked at the tiny, purposeful ants go about their business as usual as the sonorous cadences of an impromptu prayer ("reaching across the miles of intervening woodland to our loved ones in Philadelphia") sailed overhead. His grown-up son, who inherited his bent for teasing kids with words they couldn't understand, once asked me pensively: "Charles, is it true that your toes are prehensile?"

Lonely habit of revisiting places that no longer know me. One night, as a sub-counsellor at the second camp, having myself dropped off near the site of the old camp, hiking up through the pitch darkness of the camp road and looking in through the lighted

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windows of the owner's house of what was now an adult camp of rented cabins, like a ghost outside in the dark. Going back to Point O' Woods after the season and long after I was no longer asked down (without a job or a wife, I was considered almost lost to the family), and peering in through the cottage windows with a stranger's eyes. And even now, visits back to Brooklyn Heights, where we last lived when I was ten years old, swamped in nostalgia in the original sense of the word. Where in my childhood does this come from?

An early story, about a boy trying to get in emotional touch with his father through the medium of a pet crab. Part of a poem (not a very good one): "Caught in a black undertow of nostalgia/As the night came in,/Purling over ledges/Eddying in the rockpool of the backyard,/Tousling medusal anemones of memory/Electric with feeling,/He remembered a child's queer, incorruptible, seagreen innocence." The first things I ever wrote were fairy tales.

Resonances of certain words and names. "The old" ("the old road," "the old house," "the old days"), almost always a term of affection and praise on my father's side of the family. "Joseph of Arimathaea," said by my mother as she must have heard her father say it, the good rich man who came for Christ's body and gave it a respectable burial. "Our Lady of Elchi," my grandfather Rogers' term for a heavy-featured woman's head thought to be of Carthaginian provenance, of which he had bought a photograph in a Spanish museum. Always said in a certain tone, the phrase lined with a particular feeling.

My first games with myself. Sailing leaf boats in Prospect Park, the trim, tidy shallops of curled-up willow leaves and the baroque galleons of brown oak leaves. Knocking sea stones over the tall dunes with a stick picked up on the beach, as I walked from the end of Point O' Woods to the outskirts of Cherry Grove. Pretending I was a storekeeper, arranging invisible items on the shelf steps of a stoop around the corner towards Poplar Street, one wintry Sunday night.

My first collections of things. Buttons, which had to be found in the gutters and on the sidewalks of a certain part of the neighborhood only (a rectangle defined by Middagh, Willow and Pierrepont Streets and Columbia Heights). Coins, only if they were foreign. Lucky-shells, which were only to be found on the beach at Fire Island. Each collection imposed its own conditions.

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PHILIP LEVINE

Roofs

As a child I climbed the roof
and sat alone looking down
at my own back yard, no longer
the same familiar garden.
I thought of flying, of spreading
my arms and pushing off,
but when I did I was back
to earth in no time, but now
with a broken hand that broke
the fall. From this I learned
nothing so profound as Newton
might, but something about
how little truth there was
in fantasy. I had seen that
gesture into air on Saturdays
in the Avalon Theater, where
unfailingly men and women soared
and alighted delicately and with
a calm that suggested they'd
done nothing. My hand bandaged,
I climbed back up and sat
staring over the orderly roofs
to where a steeple rose
or a fire house tolled its bell.
I'd learned something essential
about all that was to come.
The clouds passing over, as I
lay back, were only clouds,
not faces, animals, or portents.
They might carry a real water
that beat fire or knives
and surrendered only to stones,
but no more. The way down
was just like the way up, one
foot following another until

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both were firmly on the ground.
Now even a twelve year old
could see he hadn't gone far,
though it was strangely silent
there at the level of high branches,
nothing in sight but blue sky
a little closer and more familiar,
always calling me back as though
I'd found by accident or as in
a dream my only proper element.

Plea from the Angel of Good Luck

Today I got a letter as I do
every day, but this was different.
It came from Flat Rock, Michigan,
and told of snow graying, the long
hard winters, rain falling all
the spring days, and the nights
without moon or stars. A young woman
wrote. She and her best friend
went by Greyhound to Detroit
and met men who tried to pull
them into dark sedans, men
who reached under their clothes
and then called them names I won't
repeat, names I had never heard before.
What can I do for them. I
who have lived in sunlight all
the days of my life, who have
whispered at night to a crown
of perfect stars the long names
of my lovers. She who wrote
is back at work, and the weeks
pass without distinction
in the roadside restaurant.
Her friend is still as fat as ever
and cries because of it. And now

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summer brings the big semis
booming through town, and at night
the freight trains moan their promise
of escape, and not one promise
is ever kept. I could say
I never made the world, but
what good would that do? I
could say that in time there
will come to be a time for everyone,
but I know otherwise. You, who read
these words, if ever you pass
through Flat Rock, just off US 24,
remember there are two unpaid debts,
one at the place that says "EATS"
and the other in the corn cannery.
I've helped you every good day
you've had, now you help me back.

To a New Mother

for Marcia

You will come to see this son
as one child among the stars—
for that is where he really lives—
who has come down for a time
to burden your arms and disturb
the quiet of your house. Be wise
and give him not one but many names,
for though you will love him
as your own, let him be all
the children who will never bear
your name as well as this one.
When you sing him the songs
you write, turn your face away
upwards to the moonless sky
and close your eyes. Out of the chaos
of all those forgotten full moons

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one face will swim forth as featureless
and cold as new silver. That is the face
of the child each of us gave the world
and the world refused.
Yes, you hold
two tight little fists of a boy
in tears who entered a world
that said no to all of us. Don't
tell him, don't go to the window
and cry out against anything.
Close your eyes, and he will too,
and both of you can sleep until
the sun breaks over the cold town
and the small lights catch hold
in separate houses and we waken
to a day like any other. If you wash
his hands and face and clean
the moonlight gently from his eyes,
then I'll wash my own. I'll bend
to the trough of cold, still water
and break the surface that held
my face calmly for a moment. So now
each of us three is somewhere
in the world, someone entering again
on an ordinary Wednesday in winter
with maybe a thank you, maybe a song.

The Window

To you it is a colorless eye
on the sleeping world. The faint light
it brings illuminates the fields
behind our old farmhouse, trees,
barns, low hills, an absence
of animal life in the hushed house
of your human head. There
is a bald path that winds
darkly among dilapidated sheds

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and the ruins of small winter gardens,
and in your mind you follow
along the overgrown banks
to a small pond, the surface
just stilled after the noisy rising
heavenward of some great white bird,
an egret possibly or a swan
who this time is only a swan.
You gaze up, aware that the wind
scatters your long dark hair going
gradually gray and tangling, aware too
that the one tear that slides
from the burning corner of an eye
is freighted with neither joy
nor sorrow but glistens on
your glowing cheek like a globe
of liquid fire and contains all
the hundred and more colors
of the spectrum and is a perfect
lens through which the world
returns to water and once more
we bear the sighs of the drowned
and the silence of the still-to-be.
Now daylight pours in this window,
and you see the shadows of doors,
chest, bed, desk, and you wonder
what tiny animals are frozen
in that dark, their eyes enormous
with fear or wonder, and you close
your own eyes and count to ten
ten times so that all those caught
by the dawn far from nest or burrow
can return. By this time
I've awakened, yawned, risen
and put on my pants, stumbling first
on the left foot, then on the right,
padded barefoot across the room
and down the stairs to see
if anyone has brought the milk,
the morning newspaper, or stolen
the hubcaps from my Pontiac.

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GERALD EARLY

Hot Spicks Versus Cool Spades: Three Notes Toward A Cultural Definition of Prizefighting

One must have a mind of winter
To regard . . .

And have been cold a long time
To behold . . .

—Wallace Stevens
"The Snow Man"

NOTE 1

As we enter the '80s and as the sport of boxing spotlights the lighter weight divisions[1] where the Latin fighters tend to congregate, a new variation on the old theme of race begins to emerge. The most important, that is, the most symbolic, battles will no longer be, as in the old days of Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, and Ray Robinson, white versus black, nor, as in the sixties and seventies with Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and Ken Norton, black versus black, but rather black versus Latin. No fight could more appropriately have opened the era of the '80s in boxing than the first Sugar Ray Leonard versus Roberto Durán bout for something called the World Boxing Council's welterweight championship.

No title fight of the seventies, with the exceptions of the Ali-Frazier clashes and, possibly, the Ali-Foreman tilt, received so much publicity as this one, or reached out so far beyond the confines of the sport's enthusiasts to excite the general public. Yet no fight of this calibre in recent memory was more disappointing. To put it

[1]Professional boxing currently has twelve weight divisions: Flyweight (not over 112 pounds), Bantamweights (not over 118 pounds), Junior Featherweights (not over 122 pounds), Featherweights (not over 126 pounds), Junior Lightweights (not over 130 pounds), Lightweights (not over 135 pounds), Junior Welterweights (not over 140 pounds), Welterweights (not over 147 pounds), Junior Middleweights (not over 154 pounds), Middleweights (not over 160 pounds), Light Heavyweights (not over 175 pounds), Heavyweights (over 175 pounds). There are currently 23 champions, two for every division except the middleweights where Marvin Hagler holds the undisputed title. Every other division has a World Boxing Council and a World Boxing Association champion, much to the chagrin of old-timers and boxing purists who think that this proliferation of champions has di-

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bluntly, it was a failure—perhaps, a poignant signal of what our slouch to the end of the century will be. The fight was surely exciting; despite complaints from some quarters about Durán's mauling and wrestling tactics, hundreds of punches were thrown by each fighter and most of them landed. The fight was performed (the most apt verb that comes to mind) at a very brisk pace, and any true boxing aficionado, any dedicated devotee of what was called in 1824 "the sweet science of bruising," found more than enough in the bout to keep his interest and even to elicit his admiration.

But the fight was a failure to the general public, and even the cultural instincts, the cultural radar, if you will, of the boxing aficionados sensed it to be a failure, because it was not conclusive. The fight had excitement but no drama, tension but no true engagement; it ultimately gave the viewer the incredibly weird sense of experiencing a kind of rhythmless syncopation. At the end of fifteen rounds, the question of who was the best—the only relevant question in boxing and, indeed, in all sports—remained largely unanswered. Leonard and Durán seemed as if they had fought the entire fight underwater; once it was over, once they emerged from the deep, there was a lingering sense that they had never touched one another, a feeling that the fight just witnessed had never even taken place. The fight was so close that it became nearly a kind of pointless derring-do on the part of the fighters. To the public mind and to our cultural selves, it was important, to be sure, that one man come forth clearly as the best. Durán was chosen the winner almost as an afterthought.

Some said that this fight would be, metaphorically, the matador and the bull—in other words, the classy boxer against the slugger; old-timers talked about its similarity to the Jake LaMotta-Ray Robinson battles; others reminisced about Carmen Basilio and Ray Robinson or Sandy Sadler and Willie Pep; those of more re-

luted the significance of holding a title, but much to the joy of promoters and television networks who can create twice as many championship fights. The junior weight divisions are less prestigious than their full-weight counterparts. The rules are the same for all the divisions, although the scoring of a professional bout may differ slightly in different states. Title bouts are fifteen rounds, non-title "elimination" bouts between two top contenders are twelve rounds and other non-title fights are ten rounds. A round is three minutes in length and fighters are given one minute rests between rounds. Generally, a fighter trains six weeks in preparation for a fight, but in some unimportant non-title fights they may train for as few as three weeks, whereas for very important title fights they may train for nine weeks. Gloves are either eight ounces or six ounces.

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cent memory said the fight was a scaled-down version of Ali versus Frazier. All of these fights were very big affairs, and all of them, except Ali-Frazier, were fights between men of different races. Even the Ali-Frazier fight had a deep and bitter intraracial contrast which I will mention shortly. So, in truth, the Durán-Leonard fight was, quite properly, placed in this tradition. The fight was the mythical confrontation that was to apotheosize one particular minority as the underground male image of the American collective psyche. The fight was the super-cool nigger versus the hot-blooded greaseball. Here was the monumental encounter between the hot and the cool, between the classical order of technique and the romantic impulse of improvisation; the inner city warriors went at each other for ownership of the night (one as Clark Kent in a Brooks Brothers suit, the other as Chanticleer in a sombrero).

There was Durán, whose style, like that of a jazz musician's, relies so much upon the inspiration of the moment that when he is uninterested in a fight he is worse than mediocre; and there was Leonard, so completely absorbed with the intricacies of his talents that with Joycean dispassion he seemed to watch the beautiful nuances his left jab made as it travelled its trajectory through the air. George Benton, once a world-class fighter, and now the trainer of such fighters as the up-and-coming featherweight, Rocky Lockridge, also seemed to be just such a combatant, enamoured of the artistry of his style. One imagines that Leonard could overwhelm his opponents while not even realizing that they actually existed. Furthermore, Durán represented the old, perhaps dying, order of champions, the young kid who learned his art on the street and went straight into the pro ranks at the age of sixteen. Leonard was the product of A.A.U. meets and the extensive amateur programs in this country which threatened to make the old street-corner art of fighting obsolete (just as the old after-hours jam sessions among jazz musicians are a thing of the past. Now, young musicians learn jazz in the practice rooms of Juilliard).

The question arises why the first Leonard-Durán fight was the symbolic racial showdown of the Latin and the black or, to put it in the vernacular of the average white, between the nigger and the spick, as opposed to the fight between Wilfred Benitez, a Puerto Rican, and Leonard, in which Leonard won the title by a knockout in the fifteenth round. Benitez, who became junior welterweight champ at the age of seventeen by beating Antonio Cervantes and

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who became welterweight champ before he was twenty-one by beating Carlos Palomino, certainly had credentials which were as impressive as Durán's. Furthermore, while the bookmakers made Benitez an underdog in his fight with Leonard, it must be remembered that Durán was also an underdog. The answer to our question is that Benitez is black. Moreover, he anglicized his first name from Wilfredo to Wilfred, an act for which most New York Latins, among whom Benitez was once considered a young, reckless god, will not forgive him. More important, Benitez does not fight in what we have come to think of as the Latin-macho style of, say, a Durán, or a Pipino Cuevas; Benitez is a slick, polished boxer, a counter-puncher who slips his opponents' blows very well. In short, there seemed to be no real racial contrast between Benitez and Leonard for the press to exploit and the public mind to latch upon.

And racial contrast is what the male politics of boxing is all about and it has a long history. Jack Johnson, the first black heavyweight champion, avoided fighting such talented blacks as Sam Langford, Joe Jeanette, and Sam McVey during his championship reign because the ticket-buying public—that is, at that time, the white public—was only interested in seeing him fight a "white hope." Even with Joe Louis, certainly the most beloved of all black boxing champions during the 1930s and 1940s, his most important and most publicized fights were those against Max Schmeling, "Two-Ton" Tony Galento, Billy Conn, and the final bout of his career with Rocky Marciano, all of whom were white. Granted that Louis' fights with black fighters such as Ezzard Charles and Jersey Joe Walcott were certainly major contests, one has only to check the various record books and boxing annuals to discover that only Louis' matches with whites get the pictures. Ray Robinson, the great black welterweight and middle-weight champion, also had his most important fights against white opponents: Jack LaMotta, Gene Fullmer, Paul Pender, Bobo Olson, Carmen Basilio and, for the light heavyweight title, Joey Maxim.

The Patterson-Liston bout changed the racial emphasis and then the most publicized title bouts became intra-racial instead of interracial. Most of Ali's important fights, unlike Louis' or Robinson's, were against blacks (e.g., Liston, Frazier, Norton, Foreman, and Spinks). This, of course, was because there were very few white fighters left in the game. Just as the Patterson-Liston bout became in the public mind—and, now, public means both black and white

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collectively—a fight between a "punk" and a "bad nigger," the first Ali-Liston match became the "crazy nigger" versus the "bad nigger," and the first Ali-Frazier fight, an encounter so fraught with political overtones that many blacks cried in the streets the day after Ali lost, became the "politically hip" black versus the "homeboy." Ali never really needed to fight white men to create racial contrast for a bout since, with the help of the media, he was able to make over his principal opponents into whites by virtue of their politics or their lack of politics; nearly every Ali opponent became a representative of the white establishment. Indeed, by the time of the Foreman fight, Ali had become a sort of Calvinist redeemer of the race and Foreman the pork-eating king of the unelect. (We must except Leon Spinks from this process. Spinks's ghetto image made Ali seem the bourgeois, overfed, conservative black. Remember, Ali never bragged, never acted the street corner clown role, before the first Spinks fight. For the second fight, Ali became the old, wily pro, the "old head," and Spinks was the green amateur, the "young boy." The bout became a classic street corner lesson in humility for Spinks. Never try to beat an old head at anything, whether it is doing the dozens or doing the dukes.)

Remembering Ali's title fights against white opponents is almost a test to discover how much trivia the mind is unable to discard. During his first championship reign there were George Chuvalo, Henry Cooper, Brian London and Karl Mildenberger (four forgettable and largely forgotten fights in chronological order, from March to September of 1966); and during his second reign there were Chuck Wepner, Joe Bugner, Pierre Coopman, Richard Dunn, and Alfredo Evangalista. Between the two reigns there were Bugner, Rudi Lubbers, Jerry Quarry, Jurgen Blin, and Chuvalo. These fights were uninteresting not only because Ali usually did not fight at his best against these opponents, but because they were so suffocatingly passionless.

Black fighters captured Ali's easily distracted attention not only because they were better than the corps of white fighters he faced, but quite simply because they were black and because they were rivals for the attention of white America. And after all, Ali, since winning the gold medal at the 1960 Olympics, wanted the attention of white America, not even its adoration, though to a large degree he got that as well; but its attention was what he, and perhaps secretly in their hearts, most blacks craved. He wanted to make

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himself so important that whites could not ignore him, to bring the black psyche out from the underground and onto the stage, the very proscenium, of the white consciousness. And he felt that he could do this better than other blacks. Ironically, Ali, while playing the role of the militant Muslim, denigrated his black opponents in ways that one would have expected only from a racist white, or a black ill at ease with his collective identity. He called them "stupid," and "ugly," he said that they "couldn't talk," and that they should not be allowed "to represent the race." In short, Ali's black opponents became symbolically that marauding mass of lower-class tricksters and berserkers who made whites flee the cities in fear, and Ali, a roguish combination of Reverend Ike and Ellison's Rinehart, a sort of jive-time, jive-assed shaman, was the middle-class, brown-skinned black who kept them at bay. If on the part of these opponents there was jealousy and envy against Ali, the "crab in the basket" mentality of the poor, then, on the part of Ali, there was honest abhorrence of blacks who traditionally made things "hard for the race." In some ways, Ali was as much of a striver as a hard-working, light-skinned hero from a Charles Chesnutt or Jessie Fauset novel.

Since the retirement of Ali no other black fighter has been able to make an effective contrast between himself and another black fighter. If two black fighters are in the ring the white public generally ignores it and the black public, while on a local level supporting such endeavors of black club fighters and novices, tends to feel a bit uneasy when the fight is for higher stakes, obviously thinking that "two brothers shouldn't be beating up each other for entertainment." In effect, the Leonard-Benitez fight was two black men slugging it out. In truth, racial contrast eases the painful realization that boxing is a sort of vicious exploitation of simply being male; racial contrast gives boxing matches symbolism, a tawdry, cheap, sensational significance which the sports-writer may understate but never leaves unsaid. So, with an insufficient white presence in boxing, and lack of general public interest in most black versus black fights, the only racial contrast that can be manipulated is black versus Latin. But the Latin must be of a certain sort.

So enter Roberto Durán, the man who, despite or perhaps because of his Indian heritage, looks both so classically and so uniquely Latin, the man with the relentless and uncompromising style—with fifty-five knockouts in seventy fights—who was cham-

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pion of the lightweights for six and one-half years and who exterminated the division's opposition with a degree of fury and disdain that endeared him to the television networks when they decided to recognize the existence of boxing below the heavyweight division. (We will not speak here about the level of Durán's competition while he was champion. Nor will we comment on the distinct possibility that Durán's considerable talents may be vastly overrated. Suffice it to say that it is doubtful that such mediocre fighters as Lou Bizarro, Vilomar Fernandez, and Edwin Viruet would have lasted until the 13th, 14th, or 15th rounds if they had been against such lightweight greats as Benny Leonard, Henry Armstrong, Joe Brown, Carlos Ortiz, Joe Gans, or Ike Williams.) Here was the true Latin fighter, or at least what an uninformed American public thought was a true Latin fighter, since we know nothing about Hispanic culture and Hispanic civilization; but we do know the word "macho," a cliché which describes nothing but signifies everything. Durán is the true Latin, macho almost to the point of irritation, the man who said to Howard Cosell that he would make Leonard "fight like a man." Here was the racial contrast that made the almost unendurable publicity for the first fight possible. Durán became the prototypical Latin fighter, many people forgetting, first, the fact that not all Latins are aggressive punchers, and that the fighters who gave Durán the hardest times in the ring—the Viruet brothers, Saoul Mamby, Zeferino Gonzalez and Vilomar Fernandez—were all Latins who understood that discretion is the better part of the manly art of self-defense, and chose to box with Durán rather than slug it out; and, second, the fact that Durán, over the years, has learned to become a better than passable boxer and actually beat Jimmy Heair in a lackluster bout by outjabbing him.

Very little more needs to be said about either Durán or Leonard; they became the blond and the brunette of the romance of American sports. Durán, we know, was the little tough guy from Panama who knocked out horses as a teenager, quit school at the age of thirteen after having reached the third grade, won the lightweight title in 1972 from Ken Buchanan on a low blow, then refused to honor the return-bout clause of the contract, the man sports-writer Dick Young called "the Animal" (a term he would never dream of using to describe a black fighter) and promoter Don King called "the Little Killer." Durán's bully boy insouciance brings to mind

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both the late Bruce Lee and jazz trumpeter Miles Davis, both of whom were also little tough guys, who, at the height of their fame, swaggered and swashbuckled in front of their audiences as if they were preening themselves for some secret fertility rite.

Leonard is the young man who has brought, as Howard Cosell tells us, "class" to boxing. He is articulate, handsome, smiles a lot, never discusses politics and, aside from one illegitimate child who was later legitimized through marriage, has very little of the taint of ghetto upon him. He gives talks about good sportsmanship to elementary school kiddies and signs autographs for Jewish ladies vacationing in the Catskills. But in truth Leonard wants so desperately to become a personality, recognizable in the same way that white movie stars and entertainers are, that he seems to be holding himself aloft for the highest bidder. Leonard, in short, wants to end up like such white ex-jocks as Bruce Jenner or Joe Namath. What we are witnessing is not the rise and fall of Sugar Ray Leonard but the selling of "Sugar." Leonard is such a shrewd young man that we can get no real sense of the army of people behind him; he seems to be the only *auteur* of his scenario. He wants to be liked, so he makes himself *likable* in about the only way a black person can in this society, by being inoffensive. (Ali, of course, was terribly offensive to this Herrenvolk democracy's taste and values, and he paid a dear price for that.) Leonard is not interested in airing his excesses or becoming, to use the 1920s phrase, "a race man"; he is not mythopoeic material. He is bland and cute, and gives the overwhelming impression of being harmless; his coolness is without subtlety, his manner as polished and chilled as a depthless lake in winter. Unlike other fighters, and most especially unlike Durán, Leonard anesthetizes the general public to the corruption and horrors of boxing because he does not look as if he came from a ghetto and gives the impression that boxing is not the only thing he can do. His presence, unlike, say, that of Leon Spinks, is not a *j'accuse* to the sport of boxing and to the society which supports it.

As a cultural event, as an event which produces a pattern of symbols and meanings, professional boxing, like most sports, is a social ritual, a drama in the most Aristotelean sense that elicits the feelings of pity and fear most vividly. Ideally, deep inside we should fear the winner and pity the loser and somehow if the match fails to produce these "cleansing" emotions, then it has failed to complete us. By completion I mean what Clifford Geertz

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once said, that the involvement in our cultural forms and rituals gives us definition, finishes an "incomplete or unfinished animal." And in sports, particularly boxing, the ritual is very much like the Christian Communion: we partake of the body and soul of the athlete, the last and exquisite god, touchingly vulnerable. We have become so accustomed to racial contrast in boxing matches that they have become nearly meaningless, just so much shoddy and cheerless brutality, without it. The masks of racial identification that our fighters wear are similar to the masks worn by the actors in ancient Greece; they are not masks that hide, not psychological masks, but rather masks which reveal all, masks of the primitive which are, as it were, giant, lurid images of the ego beneath. Probably boxing comes closest, of all sports, to producing the primitive responses of pity and fear because the sport *is* so primitive—so naked, if you will. It is appropriate that boxing should now be the possession of the cool medium of television (boxers, like other athletes, have become "T.V. heroes") where the drama has been modernized to adopt a tone of muted stridency.

So, in our cultural hearts racial contrast and, what is concomitant with it, racial identification are important for the completion of ourselves. The cultural weight of the first Durán-Leonard fight is that it reinforced the emotional perception, if not the intellectual idea, that men are different physically and psychologically because they belong to different races. Despite the mass of scientific evidence to the contrary, we still secretly wish to believe that the mask we wear, namely our skin color and our racial background, like the ancient Greek mask, makes us what we are. So, Durán becomes the stereotypical fiery, macho Latin and Leonard becomes the stereotypical cool, slick boxing black.

Racial contrast awakens the still uglier need of racial identification, something which the ludicrous boxing film, "Rocky," exploited in such an obvious, almost embarrassing way. Even today in boxing a cry can be heard which goes back as far as 1915: the cry for a "Great White Hope" who, supposedly, will save boxing for its white fans. As an example of how racial contrast brings about racial identification, consider Gerry Cooney, a promising young Irish heavyweight. Cooney has suddenly been propelled to the position of number one contender in the official rankings of the World Boxing Council and the World Boxing Association, largely on the basis of beating a very inept white fighter named Dino Den-

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nis. Now according to CBS sports broadcaster Dick Stockton, the public is "demanding" that Cooney fight for the title (or, since nearly every division has two title-holders, it is more accurate to say "fight for *a* title")—a demand based on his very impressive win over once highly-regarded Philadelphia heavyweight Jimmy Young. However, before Young lost to Cooney he was defeated by a young black fighter named Michael Dokes and beaten twice by a black Puerto Rican, Osvaldo Ocasio. The public did not "demand" that either of these fighters should immediately fight for the title. Nor did anyone think that the significance of Cooney's victory was more than slightly diluted by the fact that Young had not won an important fight since his loss to Ken Norton a few years ago. Apparently the catharsis of pity and fear produced by boxing is effected more profoundly when the viewer is of the same race as one, and only one, of the boxers.

World champions from the British Isles such as middleweight Alan Minter and lightweight Jim Watt disguise this urge of racial identification under the cloak of nationalism. Those of us with only a passing acquaintance with the history of Britain are well aware that the British nation is, in truth, the British race and that the British wish to stay as alabaster white as the heroine of an Ann Radcliffe or Jane Austen novel. Besides, when black British junior middleweight champion Maurice Hope has fought over the past few years, no band of brass-playing beefeaters file in the ring before the fight to play national airs and the British fight fans at ringside do not sing "God Save the Queen" with tears in their eyes—which is what actually happened before Minter's most recent defense against Marvin Hagler and Watt's most recent defense against Sean O'Grady of Oklahoma.

And now we must await the article in some leading sports publication such as *Inside Sports* or *Sports Illustrated* or, perhaps, in *Esquire* or *The Ring,* that will ask the asinine question: Are black fighters better than Latin fighters? The article will then offer as possible evidence for an affirmative answer the recent successess blacks have had with Hispanic adversaries: Hilmer Kenty's knockout win over Ernesto Espana for the lightweight title; Aaron Pryor's knockout win over Antonio Cervantes for the junior welterweight title; Tommy Hearns's devastation of Pipino Cuevas for the WBA's version of the welterweight title; Marvin Johnson's victory over Victor

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Galindez for the light-heavyweight title;[2] Jessie Burnet's victory over Victor Galindez to become the number one contender for the newly created cruiserweight crown;[3] Leo Randolph's upset over Ricardo Cardona for the junior featherweight title.[4] But this current trend means nothing. American fighters are coming out of amateur programs better trained than many Latin fighters who fight out of foreign countries. As many of the South American countries improve their amateur athletics, their fighters will generally gain parity with black U.S. fighters. Furthermore, such brilliant Latin fighters as Roberto Durán, Wilfredo Gomez, Alexis Arguello, Wilfred Benitez and Salvador Sanchez have had great success against black fighters in the past and probably will continue to be successful in the future. Finally, outside of Muhammad Ali, the two most eminent fighters of the decade 1970–1980 were Durán and now-retired middleweight champion Carlos Monzon. No black fighter, aside from Ali, dominated his division the way these two Latin fighters did and neither man had, through the decade of the '70s, ever lost a title fight. Let us hope that such an article dies before it is written, since the current *slight* superiority of black fighters has absolutely nothing to do with race and we need no sports-writer to make implications to the contrary in a national publication.

NOTE 2

I remember very well that I could not sleep the night that Benny Kid Paret was knocked into a coma by Emile Griffith in a welterweight championship bout in March of 1962. I had watched that fight on television and when Paret was carried from the ring, unconscious, and, for all intents and purposes, lifeless, I felt myself quivering on the inside. That night I prayed to God to save Paret's life. Indeed, I remember being on my knees and praying very hard, having learned in church that God answers those who truly believe. I thought I truly believed but Benny Kid Paret died anyway. Not only did I learn something about the inscrutable whimsical-

[2] Marvin Johnson subsequently lost the title to Eddie Gregory, who is now known as Eddie Mustafa Muhammad.

[3] This division, not officially recognized by all the boxing powers that be, is to accommodate fighters between 175 and 200 pounds. Heavyweights would then be fighters over 200 pounds.

[4] Leo Randolph subsequently lost the title to Sergio Palma of Argentina.

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ness of God but also about the precariousness of the life of a fighter. It was then that I felt that professional prizefighting should be banned, not because it was brutal (a kid who grew up in my neighborhood could not be that morbidly thin-skinned and survive), and not even because it was absurd (whether life itself is absurd is debatable but certainly all sports are), but because it was so uncaring. Boxing as an official bureaucracy hates boxers. Some boxing bureaucrats somewhere allowed a woefully out-of-condition middleweight named Willie Classen to fight and die in the ring, allowed a flashy Philadelphian named Gypsey Joe Harris to fight although he was legally blind in one eye; these same officials and bureaucrats now tolerate a parade of bums and stiffs who, fighting under various aliases, endanger their health and degrade the sport by being allowed to fight opponents who are infinitely superior to them. In the past year, seven fighters have died as a result of beatings which they sustained in the ring, the latest being a young Welsh Bantamweight named Johnny Owen, who was knocked out by champion Lupe Pintor in the twelfth round of their title fight. Owen never regained consciousness and died in a Los Angeles hospital a few weeks later.

So far, the average death rate has been one fighter every two months. And yet nothing has been done to safeguard the fighters; various state boxing commissions have not coordinated their records to prevent, say, a fighter who was knocked out forty days ago in Maryland from fighting in Pennsylvania or Nevada; if a ringside doctor is present at a fight it is almost always a general practitioner, possibly an internist, doctors who are expert at examining cuts, but almost never a neurologist, a doctor who would recognize the signs of incipient brain damage; nothing has been done to change the rules of professional boxing, either reducing the number of rounds or changing the style of the gloves or introducing a standing eight count in professional fights; the only things the WBC and the WBA are concerned about is squabbling over who is the true champion of a division or compiling a ranking system often with the money of promoters and television networks in mind; so, suddenly, a very uncreditable bum becomes a contending fighter—this, of course, means that many a fighter's record is more fiction than fact.

These are old complaints. Indeed, every few years some hardboiled, reform-minded sports reporter like the one portrayed by Humphrey Bogart in the 1950s cinéma vérité classic, "The Harder

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They Fall," recites this list as a kind of litany to stir the soul of the great mass of the unconcerned. The fact that these complaints are not new should tend to bother us rather than bore us. After all, these cries of reform reveal that the only major innovations that have taken place in the last 120 years of professional fighting have been placing gloves on a fighter's fists and reducing championship fights from interminable lengths to twenty rounds and, finally, to fifteen. But it should be obvious to all that professional prizefighting cannot be reformed, not with so many bogus and even criminal entities, outlaws to their very bootstraps, struggling for corporate hegemony while the boxers are seen as so much meat hanging on tenderhooks (the most moving scene in the film "Rocky" is when Sylvester Stallone is punching a carcass in a slaughterhouse. Heavy-handed but still striking symbolism). The solution for this sport is quite simple: professional fighting must go the way of cockfighting and dog-fighting and be banished from our realm. Then, the amateur program, which is more sanely supervised, can be offered in colleges, and poor boys from our mean streets can be given an education and the possibility of actually qualifying for work from which they may get a pension in their old age. We have seen how, as a cultural phenomenon, boxing brings out deplorable urges to see ourselves racially, and we have only to walk into any local gym, get to know any two-bit fighter, to learn that as a nonsymbolic part of our social system fighting is an ugly sport. The one word that comes to mind more than any other watching the fighters work in the gym is "proletariat." These men are honestly, and in a most ghastly way, *toiling*, and what is most striking is how much more grotesque this work is than, say, *the* nightmare of an assembly line. And proletariat is such an appropriate word for fighters whom we also call stiffs and bums, words that grew out of the working class vocabulary—a stiff being someone who is managing to survive in the working world, a bum being a stiff who has temporarily been cast out of the working world, and hence is just "bumming around."

As an ardent, I might say, passionate lover of professional boxing, a follower of my boxing heroes since I was a young boy, and as one who appreciates the working class folklore which surrounds boxing, it is particularly difficult to call for its demise. I remember listening with intense fascination while patrons in the local barbershop spoke of the exploits of Sonny Liston; I can recall the agonizing disappointment when my uncle failed to take me to see the

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Joey Giardello-Dick Tiger middleweight championship bout; there comes to mind the anguish when I read that the once magnificent heavyweight Cleveland "Big Cat" Williams, who was nearly shot to death a few years before, was going to fight Muhammad Ali for the title, a hopeless mismatch, and I can remember aggrieved amazement when I heard that the promising young junior lightweight Tyrone Everett had been shot to death by his girlfriend. Perhaps, in the end, only a true lover of the sport can understand why proles deserve a better fate.

NOTE 3

Eugene "Cyclone" Hart was once a prospect for the middleweight title. He had a left hook that was the best that that division had seen since the days of Ray Robinson; he would whip it around with his whole body, producing a crushing blow. Unfortunately, Hart was not a good defensive fighter and tended to get discouraged and disoriented if his left hook failed to produce results within the first few rounds. He had recently lost a fight by knockout to Vito Antuofermo who was to become, briefly, the undisputed middleweight champ, when I met him in circumstances which were probably not very flattering to Hart. He had been arrested for disorderly conduct and, at that particular time, I was working with the Release-on-Own-Recognizance Program (ROR), which was funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Agency. My job was to interview prisoners before their arraignments to discover if they were eligible for release on their own recognizance—or as they called it, free bail. I cannot speak about other projects that LEAA gives money to but I certainly can say that my job was a monumental waste of my time and the taxpayers' money. But that topic of discussion must wait for another time. Of course, once I discovered that Cyclone Hart was "in the tank," I made sure to finagle his paperwork so I could interview him. Quite naturally, once I got him to my desk I promptly forgot his bail interview—he did not need one anyway since he had never been arrested before and the charge was so minor that "free bail" was a foregone conclusion—and we sat and talked boxing.

"Are you still going to fight?" I asked. "Lots of people say you're washed up."

"Well, I'm still gonna try," he said. I remember how hard and strong his body was. He had the hips of a dancer, the shoulders of a

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half-back. "I think I can still make it. I got a few good fights in me and I might still get a title shot. That's what I'm hangin' around for: a title shot."

"I thought you were going to knock Antuofermo out of the box early," I said.

"Yeah, so did I, but he's a pretty tough cat."

We talked for a while about some other of the local fighters like Jerome Artis, Bad Bad Bennie Briscoe and Sammy Goss. When he rose to return to his cell he said:

"Yeah, I'm still hangin' in. I mean, what else can I do? My luck might change."

I had expected him to make a sort of sign with his fists when he said that, but he merely held his hands relaxed at his sides. His lack of gesture was as surprising to me as walking down a flight of stairs and anticipating a final step when none is there. Cyclone Hart was a washed-up fighter at the age of twenty-seven.

"I still might get a title shot," he said as a policeman led him away.

"Yes," I called after him, from my desk, "that's nice work if you can get it."

POSTSCRIPT: LEONARD-DURÁN II

The hardest thing to teach a young boy bent upon becoming a professional prizefighter, according to any cigar-chomping, gibbous old fight trainer, is to get up and continue fighting after the youngster has been knocked down and hurt. In most cases, a fighter is knocked down by a punch he did not see and it is only human nature to want to avoid the unknown and not to wish to continue. It takes hours and hours of the most severe sort of training to make a fighter overcome that natural instinct. Robert Jarrett, a black man who is neither a cigar-chomper nor gibbous, explained this to me one winter afternoon. He is a former professional prizefighter who now trains black youngsters in the Richard Allen projects in Philadelphia in the "sweet science." "Once a kid learns this," he pontificated, "he becomes a man." I did not disagree. But when I see a decked fighter get up and continue to fight, or, in most instances, continue to get beaten to a pulp, I know it is not "heart" or courage which makes him stand up, but a sort of Skinnerian conditioning which has effectively dulled his brain so that he has no real idea when he is hurt or how badly.

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Professional boxing, in recent months, has come to resemble professional wrestling in the absurd perversity of its demeanor—lacking, however, wrestling's vulgar hilarity. Wrestling, like Roller Derby, realizes its own sense of burlesque and continually teases and insults its lower-class audience with a sort of mock drama as if it were masterminded by some Grub Street exile; boxing has now mistaken its hysteria for the most profound theatre. It has, in a word, become not just a joke spoken in poor taste, but a joke gone in the teeth.

The abrupt ending of the Durán-Leonard rematch, with Durán, for whatever reason, walking away from Leonard in the eighth round, was a pathetic ending to a rivalry which had so engaged the imagination and symbolism of our culture. Perhaps Durán walked away because he was "taking a dive," although one would be hard put to imagine what corporate interest could induce him to embarrass himself so in front of his family, friends, fans, and countrymen, or what corporate interest would want him to; or perhaps he walked away because he experienced an epiphany which revealed at once and at last to his eyes the absurdity of his profession; or perhaps, and this is more likely, he felt very sick: the once poor, lean street urchin, who when he first began as a professional was easily able to make the 135 pound limit for lightweights, may have, in acquiring fame and riches, eaten his way not only out of the lightweights but perhaps out of the welterweights as well. Crash dieting and the use of diuretics are poor methods of training. Alas, this is what happens to those who live life in the fast lane. At any rate, this poetic battle which was to pit the war machine's frenzy against the body electric's gallantry became just another tainted, bizarre contest. This fight which was to justify the existence of boxing wound up justifying its swift execution.

This bout kept the spirit of several other recent championship fights: Muhammad Ali's painful return, in which, donning another disguise of Melville's Confidence Man, he paid the price of passing blood for a week in exchange for ten million dollars and the opportunity to show the world what early male menopause is like. After acting and Third World diplomacy failed, only boxing remained for this most self-conscious man to engage his puerile exhibitionism. More recently, there was the fight for the junior welterweight championship of the world between Aaron Pryor, the black champion, and Gaetan Hart, the white Canadian challenger. Not only did this fight exploit, as usual, racial contrast and racial identifica-

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tion, but the network which televised the fight reminded the viewers at every opportunity that Hart had seriously injured one fighter in the ring and killed another. Implied in this grotesque reporting, and in the whole *raison d'être* for Hart, an extremely mediocre fighter, to be fighting for the championship was the obscene question: Would Pryor be Hart's next victim? Hart had eighteen losses on his record; normally no fighter with such a propensity for losing would have been even remotely considered for a championship fight, and the two men he severely battered in the ring were even more inept as fighters than he was and probably should not have been allowed to fight. Pryor knocked out Hart in the sixth round of a mismatch.

In early November I went to an elementary school gymnasium in Ithaca to watch a local amateur fight card. The first bout of the evening was between two ten-year-old kids, one black, the other white, representing two different boxing clubs. The white youngster was game and tried very hard but the black boy had real talent, the look and hunger of a possible future professional prizefighter, and he thoroughly thrashed his opponent and easily won the fight. As I watched the black boy being congratulated by his friends and as my eyes circled the gym and viewed Ithaca's lower class out in mass to support its relatives and friends I asked myself, why? Why does this youngster want to be a fighter? Why would his family be proud if he became one? His chances of having a career like Ali, Durán or Leonard—boxing's representative men of the moment—are so remote that no bookie would give any sort of betting line on the possibility. And the cost of this misplaced ambition is so much deeper and heavier than if a middle-class kid who plays tennis, another "solitary ego" sport, wished to become John McEnroe.

Tennis is a bourgeois respected recreation, second only to jogging; no stigma is attached to its pursuit by the white middle and upper classes, and the failure to succeed as a tennis professional does not affect the middle-class youngster's mobility or the possibility that he can cultivate other humane or profitable interests. In other words, a tennis career and, say, an MBA degree, are not incompatible. They are phenomena of the same world and they represent the same bourgeois values.

Boxing is part of another culture, available to a boy who cannot be a singer, a preacher, or a thief (which are really the only other

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job training programs readily available to the lower class). His success is measured by his movement up the fight card until, finally, he becomes the featured attraction, the main event, and the high rollers of the upper class, caught between ennui and debauchery, come to watch him fight and to bet on the outcome. For the poor, any ambition is ultimately to make money, to change their lives, to make them better. But, as James Brown sang in the mid-sixties, "Money won't change you . . . " A poor person with money is simply, to the eyes of the middle and upper classes, the beast displaced, the tolerated savage, the simpleton with poor taste. And the poor boy himself discovers that the rage which he nurtured to become champion, the rage which pushed him from his birth, the rage against that stultifying bourgeois monolith which has made his life miserable, either still gnaws at him like a burning ulcer or has left him completely burned out by the absence of desire. Thus, he finds himself naked and vulnerable, in a nest of vipers. And further, he discovers that it was the rage, and the rage alone, which not only kept him alive but made him human. Money won't change you, indeed. But as James Brown sang in the same song, "time will take you out."

As I watched the youngster in the ring I thought for a moment about Benny Briscoe, the Philadelphia middleweight, now an aging 38, who had several times fought for the title and each time came up empty. Losses to Carlos Monzon and Roderigo Valdes for the title and losses to such up-and-coming middleweights as Marvin Hagler (now the champion of that division) and Vito Antuofermo climaxed a career of frustration and bitterness. Bennie will never be champion and, although he continues to fight, he must hold down another job in order to live.

On any given weekday, in any gym in America, there are ten-year-old boys banging away at heavy bags and sweating in desperation as they pursue that Belle Dame sans Merci—a professional boxing title.

On any given weekday, Bennie Briscoe hauls trash in the ghetto of North Philadelphia. The long journey from the gym to the professional prize ring ended as it began: on the streets. As the corner boys say, Briscoe still "lives on the block."

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RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Shanhaikuan

Out there, the horizon smudged with smoke of the little
freighters.
Inshore the transparent shallows and the ribbed brown floor.
South, the flat beach draws its line firm to the edge of distance.

The beach ends north in a point of rocks where baby waves slip
and wash back and gurgle: and jumbled in the rocks slabs of big
and broken
stones. These are the last stones of the Great Wall, which loped

over the unsung hills and mountains of North China, and
straggered
and broke up into the blue Gulf. Beyond, it is Manchuria.
Another country. But on the near shore children are playing.

They rode down to swims and games on a little horse-drawn
trolley
which links the beach to the station and the small foreign
settlement.
There is the long two-storey hotel with its wide veranda,

the spaces of its dining and bed rooms, the deferential
long-gowned servants, the menus, with lists of champagnes and
clarets,
the tennis courts, and the baron with the underhand serve.

Inland from the tracks is a Chinese city, small but
as walled as Peking, with gates towers and battlements;
and far above are the bulging cliffs, the saddle where the Great
Wall

of China drapes away toward Jehol. And from one height
the dizzy downlook gave a secret valley, nestling
one tiny and complete and inaccessible temple.

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They Used To Have a Homecoming Day

End of a hot day's drive on unimaginative
straight roads over the flat of the huge midland with its too much
corn; and the names come out of my past, Mahomet, the Sangamon,

Champaign-Urbana; threading the difficult point-to-point of U.S.
46. What a way to come back or not quite to
come back. Race and Green gloomed up, then the colossal

stadium. So to our motel. Phone book. No names, they must all
be dead. Unseen, Lincoln Hall, where I studied, where I taught Latin
and Philosophy, and sweated it out, and knew my future.

Shapes in the mist, shot by and lost. Flat streets, the rented
rooms, skinny breakfasts. Kicking leaves on the sidewalks.
The Press, alien now and I'm grumpy. Good bye Urbana.

Known territory glimpsed gone. No instant, no deferred replay.

Aspects of Time

The fourth dimension
for us, whatever us may be
will be was.

Ripens the grape. Shrivels it.
Or the claret in the cask, or the shape
of the boy or the girl, begins them matures them rots them.

Tears moon from earth

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loses stars in the hole.

Boils our beans
burns them.

Elicits the form of the stone into statue.
Made the stone.

Verb not noun or adjective
constant and cruel.

Makes us what we will be are have been.
Creates us kills us.

Home

Corridors carpets and closed glass, wheel chairs,
and the little steps and canes, and the nurse's arm for those who
went once as powerful men, firm women: all this

wreckage of past perfections: physical all washed out and the
spirit
only left: quiet, sealed temperatures: the carefully
preserved. Bit by bit I have seen it coming, in mirrors.

No brink, a gentle progress some guy up there has decreed was
for
us. A decade or so now left. As elderly visitor
I walk through this as a young man walks and know what I'm in
for.

Fragments of the imagination of God, and his handiwork.

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JOYCE CAROL OATES

Forgetful America

South of wintry Scranton Pennsylvania on a pot-holed
jolting road the sudden sunny glare breaks to a sea
of cars a sea of glittering winking cars wrecked
in fields in ditches in a dying pine woods
slammed against the sides of red-gullied hills

Where did they come from, a child laughs, why
are there so many?

Acres of cars stretching across the valley each car
in its original promise a proclamation:
such miracles!—O America!—such silly loves
now scrapped humbled in the hazy stink of burning
rubber
in the wintry Pennsylvania sky

Consider, one of us says, the first baby carriage
the swelling catkins on the birch tree consider
the first hard stare between lovers the first frightened smile
the dinette the Christmas ice skates
the marvelous smell of new seatcovers
the smell of the first dust-jacket the first book
the sun spinning crazy as a copper penny as we race
from Monday's horizon to Tuesday

Then there are other times
There are white places in the map
There are great blank yawning margins
There are pauses, yawns, coughs, throat-clearings
and silence

Forgetful America
meaning no cruelty
driving on keeping up with traffic

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blown with the March morning west is all directions for us
speeding the cracked highway which we curse in jest
there is something dimly troubling behind us retreating
only in the mirror now framed behind a forehead of
wrinkles
a glittering sad thought like a lost button no one will stoop
to retrieve in the mirror, retreating what was it?
—cars?

South of wintry Scranton Pennsylvania the broken road runs
backward into a graveyard too hazy to be recalled
the mirror flashes guiltily
but why?—what was it?
Forgetful America speeding to noon

The Proofs of God

Children are clamoring for the proofs of God.
Beneath their pillows are round blank buttons.
Their silky baby locks, outgrown, lie in drawers
amid twine and thumbtacks and old report cards
and packets of seeds never opened.

There are competing theologies:
you must devour only animal fiber,
you must contemplate the moon through an isosceles triangle.
Never doubt with your full strength, the wise say.

They have been *there*, after all,
and everywhere.
Unfortunately they remember very little.

A packet of sepia photographs, or are they postcards
scrawled over in an unfamiliar purple hand . . . ?

The proofs of God fly at us out of old leatherbound books,
shaken loose from old attic clothes,

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old highway maps.
Old now, the children are clamoring.
What are the proofs of God, they insist.

"You used to live here?
But what does that prove?
Everyone has once lived somewhere."

Another

Another dusk, languorous and coldly whitely blue
and the magnificent spruces humbled with snow
again the western distance bruised with sun
again the stillness that seeps
out of the earth's secret core

Another dusk, and it is that moment
the heart falters in the face of such beauty
but then again it is routine
why do you take everything so seriously—
as if you wanted to be hurt!
Another dusk

deepening into night
and once again the sly reflection in the window
floating in the glass's mock depth
taking faint colors out of the night

Well—another dusk, and why do you stare
melancholy and smiling,
as if it were all new,
and that image in the window a baptism
into something yet unthought?

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SAMUEL HAZO

From *The Feast of Icarus*

To FLY? No more a miracle than walking. Even doctors are perplexed by how our skin-sleeved and bone-buttressed shapes manage to be borne erect on our soles and heels and toes without collapsing into a mass, without tipping over or leaning left, right or forward, without, finally, so much as a passing thought of just how we do it. But we do it as did our predecessors and as will our successors. And no one marvels at this marvel. But talk or read of a man from Amsterdam or Washington who mimes the hawks, and our eyes enlarge, our lower jaws loosen a jot, and the questions start because we know as a matter of earthbound fact that man cannot fly. Only Icarus is exempt. Ask anyone to name the first man who flew, and the answer will, quickly or eventually, be the same. Icarus. No one seems to doubt that he swam the Mediterranean sky with his threatened and daring architect of a father from Crete toward Sicily. His tale is so much a part of us that we take the flight as fact. It's his flying too close to the sun that spawns the myth, that prompts our eyebrows to congeal and our hearts to pump, that stumps us with an ultimate why. We forget or ignore that the first myth is that he flew at all. Why isn't that enough for us? For centuries it hasn't been, and it isn't now. Not that he flew, no, that was not and is not what we see as his mission as well as his mistake, but that he flew too high.

*

Of his father, Daedalus, we know slightly more than the little we know of the son. An engineer he was in the fullest sense, the inventor of the hatchet, the carpenter's level and sails for ships, originally an Athenian before he decided to go to Crete to avoid retribution for his murder of Talos, a rather competitive nephew. Then came the unpleasant business with Minos, the king of Crete, who threatened to imprison him in a labyrinth which Daedalus himself

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had been commissioned to design and construct. Cornered, Daedalus conceived the idea of flying with Icarus to Sicily. So much for biography . . . I try to understand the man, father to father. I feel how he must have trained both himself and the boy to use the never-before-recycled feathers, how he must have wondered if the scheme would work and, if it did, how the two of them would be able to make it all the way to Sicily, a distance over unobligingly similar water of more than four hundred miles as the crow or the winged man flies. But suddenly I see him concluding that the feathers did indeed do what feathers were supposed to do, that the boy took to sky-swimming instantly, that he, the creator of the level and a man inured to the importance of balances, had to warn the boy to maintain a straight course at a fixed altitude in order not to jeopardize the fragile glue of the wing-wax. But the boy, as boys in the sky for the first time might be expected to do, refused to listen and decided to climb. I can almost hear the father scolding him in mid-air just before the first feather let go, then the second, then the third . . .

*

Foolhardy as it proved to be, the climb of Icarus certainly was not foolish in conception. After all, if one could fly at all, what was wrong with soaring? Icarus had no way of knowing in advance which altitudes were dangerous and which were not. He was simply yielding to the same urge that athletes yield to when they raise the bar higher for one more jump, when they strain to hurl a javelin one inch farther than they've ever thrown it. So, whatever the urge was that inspired Icarus to ignore his father's advice and veer cloudward, sunward, starward, it was not out of the ordinary. And actually he was doing quite well until he ran afoul of the sun. Perhaps the sun, being the magnetic center of everything even though Icarus had no way of knowing that then, drew him higher or, rather, closer. Who knows? Summer moths flutter after sunset around the sun's substitutes—lanterns, fires, incandescent bulbs—from a similar need. They are lured instinctively to illumination, the heated core of their brief universes. Icarus may have been obeying mere moth-logic. Besides, who is able to resist a magnet when it means business? Part climb, part pull, the flight of Icarus was really a matter of the sun leashing him nearer and nearer until

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the wax thinned and ran and the feathers fell, and he plunged wingless into the waiting seas like a moth that has been singed into silence by the very fire that warmed it.

*

Claustrophobia and the fear of suffocation are twins. Most of us would readily admit that we usually try to avoid circumstances which might place us at the mercy of either. Which suggests to me that we are ordinarily attracted to their exact opposites—spaciousness and oxygen. I would go further and say that these two elements find their perfect synthesis in flight, which is essentially a matter of navigating the very air we breathe. Who has not felt a vicarious rise in his spirit when he watches a chickenhawk coast the high winds over a mint field? And what is it that makes the eyes of boys shine when their kites catch the right currents and climb as far as their fishing strings permit, becoming like manta rays fighting to escape the lines and fastenings that will finally tug them home. And I could say the same for hang-gliding and everything else that qualifies as heavier-than-air flight. It's as if spaciousness and the open air offer us life without the usual limitations, and such a concept of life attracts us. It appeals to those of us who agree with William James's observation that too many people live within limitations that are not only self-imposed but well below the limits of real challenge. Such people are not Icaruses. Icarus stands for a life that wants to exceed its limits, that wants to make its only horizon what it's yet to see or do, that hungers to carry possibility to a point where possibility and impossibility blur. That this tests the human spirit is obvious. That its acceptance requires valor is also obvious, particularly in those instances when one must proceed without knowing in advance where the final limits are and where no precedent exists to offer even the flimsiest guidance.

*

Icarus could easily be the god of fountains. The beautiful but ultimately futile and purposeless ascent of water from some upthrusting spring always reminds me of him. There is the same war against gravity, the same climb from high to higher to highest, the same tension in the ascent and the same listless grace in the de-

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scent. I remember, for example, watching for as long as half an hour the jet d'eau in Geneva. I stared as the waterjet worked its way up from a small, frothy upheaval to a spray-fringed pillar of white water. The core of the pillar kept nosing upward, peaking as it rose and spraying the lake and lakeshore below with shower after wind-curled shower. It mesmerized me as moving water (or fire) always mesmerized me. Water-dance. Fire-dance. Each of the two elements keeps creating itself in its own constantly original way. With fire it is always a sequence of flashing and vanishing until the last sizzle. But with fountaining water it is a liquid ballet. The grace is a grace that only water on the rise can create. First, the powerful push to the sun. Then the powerless fall from the highest point of the push. In Geneva I watched the pure energy of water as it speared up from its spring, and I had the impression that, like a rocket to the moon, it could go wherever it wanted. But the farther it soared from the earth, the weaker the jet grew until it seemed to pivot on the height of its own strength before it plunged back with a spent, shattered diminuendo that proclaimed the earth had won again. When it rose, the water was concentrated like a stalk. But in the fall the stalk flared open and down like willow branches sleeved with melting snow.

*

Lindbergh in prospect is not the same as Lindbergh in retrospect. In retrospect he is Paris and praise and a ride through tickertape snow in New York and, afterward, the matter of a son kidnapped and killed and then the flap with Roosevelt and then the war and finally the last flight to an island grave in Hawaii. In prospect he is different. He is seated in the Spirit of St. Louis. It is raining lightly, and he is just lifting off from an airfield on Long Island, just clearing the surprisingly high telephone wires at the end of the field and wondering if he has not weighted the plane with too much gasoline, just veering slightly north toward Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in the first landhugging arc before he dares the Atlantic. The biggest problem is sleep, or rather the lack of it. He's been too excited and occupied to sleep, and he now faces thirty to forty hours when sleep will be fatal. Was it lack of sleep that doomed the others: Nungesser, Davis, Wooster, Coli, Byrd, Bennet, Novile and Fokker? Or was it bad luck or flaws in the equipment

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or—or—or? He speaks to the Spirit of St. Louis as to a good wife, modulating the gasoline flow as he speaks so that the consumption from separate tanks will be as equal as possible in order to avoid any yaws or lists. He forgets his sandwiches completely. The death of every other pilot from both continents is a heady history of defeat after defeat, and it stays with him. History insists that what he's doing can't be done, but still he does it, is doing it, and history is listening or rather history is happening with the passage of one ocean mile after another beneath the shadow of his wings. To keep awake he tells himself that there is "no alternative but death or failure," and only his fear of one or the other or both shocks him back from sleep. Ahead of him now is death or Ireland. After he passes Ireland, it becomes death or Paris. Even though he believes that he has enough fuel left to reach Rome, he tells himself that he might be wrong. After all, the purpose was to cross the "3,600 statute miles" of the Atlantic, wasn't it? Why risk a crash in the Alps? But still, but still . . .

*

The second of the thus far two world wars saw the widespread use of floating airports for military purposes. Prosaically but functionally christened aircraft carriers, they roamed the oceans, predominantly though not exclusively the Pacific, whose peace-denoting name is a further irony for those with an ear for what is linguistically unsuited to its essence. "Flat-tops" later emerged as a more poetic designation than aircraft carriers, but in fact the flat tops merely described the decks of these enormous ships. In below-deck hangars were stored squadrons, and in addition to pilots these ships carried hundreds of sailors with specialties in everything from cooking to firefighting. Because these carriers were themselves vulnerable to attack from the air as well as from sub-surface and surface ships, they were usually accompanied in cordon by destroyers, cruisers and battleships. Launched from their often pitching decks, the carriers' fighters and divebombers would form squadrons in the upper air and streak to their missions and then return to land on the same decks from which they had been launched earlier. The landing of crippled aircraft was an experience in peril, and there is documentary footage that graphically shows planes exploding into flames as they crash into conning towers, planes overshooting and

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vaulting into the sea, planes missing the deck entirely and crushing anti-aircraft gunners, planes nosing over as the restraining rows of deck cables miss and miss the fuselage hook and then finally catch. More poignant to me than these homing disasters are those stories of pilots returning from their missions to find no carrier at all waiting for them. Unaware that the carrier had been sunk during their absence, the pilots would be condemned to search and search the endless darkening meadows of the sea for their only hope. With one eye on their gasoline gauges and another on the clueless ocean, they would fly and fly, breaking radio silence only to be answered by silence. I imagine these doomed pilots at that last instant when the fuel needle touches empty and below-empty, which is as valid an equivalent as the earliest aviator's watching the sun melt the wax from his feather-woven wings. I think of each of those new Icaruses as their motors begin to miss and sputter. They try the radio one last time. Perhaps they bail out at this point, but I suspect that they remain in the cockpit as if reluctant to leave the plane's womb. When the propellors stop for the last time, they ride their planes into the sea that receives them like the waiting grave it always was and is and shall be.

*

From where I wait the climb of dawn, the first sun happens like the echo in the sky of a great fire in the Appalachians. My wedge of Pennsylvania keeps clocking toward it minute by second until it reaches the exact instant when the upper orange rim tips above the furze of the eastern horizon. The hot yellow fan of light surges out into the waiting sky like ink seeping slowly upward into a blue blotter. And still the earth swirls slowly until the sun becomes its complete self. I know that the rise—but it is not an actual rise—will hallucinatingly go on to the apogee of noon, creating for everything and everyone beneath it a world spared for one second only of shadows. Then the illusion of descent will start because of the counterclocking of the satelliting earth. The shadows will become longer than the objects that create and project them, and the west will wait for the last light as quietly as a grandfather too old to give a damn about death will wait for death. So much for evening and its fears. Now in the early sunsweep I'm suddenly reminded of a dawn when I was a passenger on a DC-9 en route from

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Pittsburgh to New York. The visibility at take-off on that stormy morning was less than a mile, and the rain splashed, streaked and speckled the portholes on the fuselage, which seemed more and more like oar-ports, as we took to the air. I watched the washed wings quiver while we surged higher, and I kept imagining how the jet, as it pushed loudly toward its cruising altitude through reefs of close, dirty clouds, reminded me of a submarine surfacing quickly in an emergency. All at once we broke through and over the layered reefs, and there, all around and above us, was the clean, dry sky where it had been all the time, and the morning was blazing up and over us like music. That night, when I returned on the same plane, I felt the darkness closing in and down on the plane like a cap on a cup. Far below, it was still evening, and I could see a slithering of the last, almost horizontal seeping of sunshine. But at our altitude there was only the dark, which kept descending with us from midnight at the sky's crown to the matching indigo that was catching up to midnight on the ground.

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PETER MAKUCK

Letter Poem

I've been having these flashes
of your Mom lately: her laugh
the brogue
that lovely laying on of dishes.
I keep seeing you drive
that long drive to Yale New Haven
and wait in the hospital basement
for her suitcase of last things.
It was sadistically light
wasn't it?

Last night
there were thin pale ghosts of light
drifting from wall to wall
and I listened to Phyllis breathe
the faint metal heart
of my watch tick. Christ
it's frightening—like those bloody, ghastly
pictures of Christ crucified
the nuns called "holy"
and gave us like poisoned candy.
I thought of how you said that remission
made summer full
of ways to show her what had to be shown.
And she knew. This has to be
what grace is
what Christ is
and the nuns never knew.

Once in the middle of the night
crying
Keith woke up.
I ran to his room.
He hung on tight, sobbed that something
stinking and black

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was after him in the woods.
It was, is.
And I wanted to get a gun, a chair
and post myself at his door.

Letters like this, my friend,
and poems that fence with death
are that same thing:
the shotgun aimed at emptiness.
But I'll write anyway
load both barrels
with words like "love" and "care"
and let it go—a poor poem
aimed at an emptiness
active and stinking and black.

To the Snow-Walker

Space tells matter how to move;
matter tells space how to bend.
— "Einstein," PBS-TV

Enough!
That's probably what you said
To our white New England
Street getting whiter
Drifting higher with snow—
Cars useless.

Enough
Of our tall front room
Chilled with gray light
And the window where twigs bobbed
And pointed beyond themselves
For days.

Finally
You told all that white space

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To get bent. On foot, into a scourge
Of wind, you hiked toward the hospital
Five miles away, Mom unvisited
For days.

Enough
Of this foolishness, she said
Before you joked about "All For Love"
But meant it. Then the last dark half
Of your ten-mile orbit
The wind strong

Enough
To blow you down by Mr. Donut.
But you reached home, built a fire
Fell asleep at sixty-eight, and
Flung into that orbit for two more
Snowy days.

Enough
Just enough pride in your voice
To move me longdistance
Here in the sunbelt
Where the only real snow is remembered.
And I wonder is it

Enough
To know the white coming down
On what we do, covering all that matters
Making us enter the white space and
Bend it with the small dark bodies
Of our words.

Sixty-eight.
Ten miles. Us orbiting each other
In thought like small planets. Snow-walker
Leaning into the white wind—
I can never think of this
Enough.

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BARRY SPACKS

Neilsen

"They called me Battling Nelson," said Neilsen,
My neighbor. "Assumed I was Irish . . . fought
My way to school and back, plus home
For lunch—*there's* something I can't understand!"
(Somebody's parking a car at his curb)—
"What do they think, they live in my house?"
Or he's up on the roof, age 76,
Brooming away the snow. "Insane,"
My daughter says, "it insulates."
We shrug, we both say "Neilsen"—Neilsen's
Throwing a stone at a dog, it's not
His dog, why use his tree?—each fall
He clears the leaves to his very boundary,
Exact. I guess that all along,
With his passion for neatness and property,
He'd wanted only this: "O world,
MAKE SENSE!" "You boys! Get off that wall!
Is that your wall? is that your wall?"

Essence

A hummingbird taps at my window, stirred
By reflected lilacs, seductively blurred
In the glass. Astray from
An actual blossom,
He'll yearn for this other
Spirit-flower,
Mirrored beauty
Surpassing sense;
Idea only;
Ache of romance.

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IOANNA CARLSEN

In a Manner of Speaking

I had the most breautiful dream about us;
if I tell it to you, you'll believe me,
won't you? Of course by tell I mean evoke,
since dreams are not describable:
let me evoke a shimmering,
let's say a street around rain, already fallen,
whose very atmosphere is lambent, cleansed;
let's say there's a wrought-iron gate and balloons
near a tree which is perfectly placed and probably flowering,
let's say my feet are in shoes almost too delicate and expensive
to walk in, let's say your hair is champagne and amber,
let's say light, let's say it's so definitely summer
that everything vaguely denotes it.

I don't inform you but you know
that I have received at an unexpected place
gifts, usually requiring payment, of perishables—
green and golden plenty, a child's dress, white,
cherry and cerulean silks;
meeting you encompasses this cause for celebration,
and we flaunt our pleasure in our fortune publicly,
consciously and obliviously at once:
let's say your arm is around my waist,
let's say that you have kissed me,
and then I'm driving us away, the corner backs up to us,
green leaves shine, spacious freshness prevails;
inside the car I know where we are going,
and, let's say, if I make a mistake,
you find it amusing—

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so that my errors are barely real
and pleasure is where we are,
and this dream lasts a long time.

The aftermath is not brackish,
but shells and creatures; living momentarily on sand
they will be reclaimed by the sea
at the next wave or tide.
Let's just say that when we wake,
before tea and after shaving, you touch me
and I press your figure with mine.

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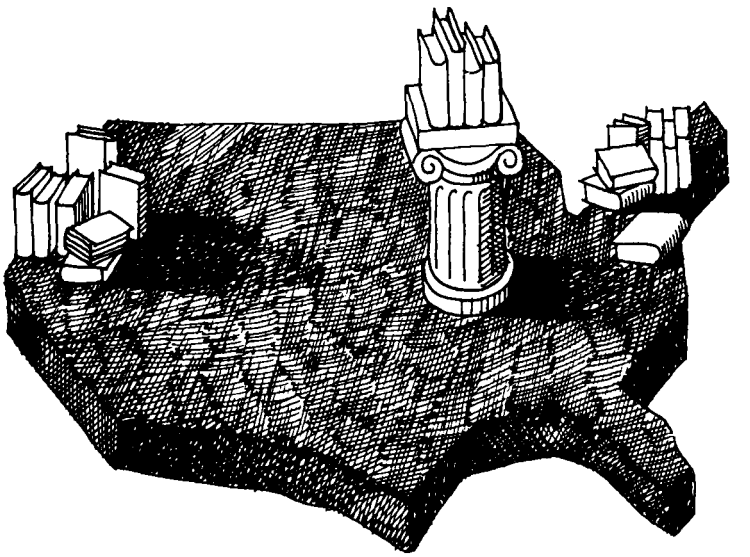

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Picasso Brujo[1]

SELDOM HAS THERE BEEN AN ARTIST AS LEGENDARY as Picasso. Seldom has there been an artist about whom the legends have been as true or who has, wittingly or unwittingly, made as effective use of them. There is Picasso the child prodigy, creating accomplished works at an age that makes one think of Mozart and Raphael. There is Picasso the genius, wresting from Cézannesque Impressionism one of the greatest and most influential artistic movements of the twentieth century. There is Picasso the innovator, pushing painting to the very limits of abstraction in a breathtakingly brief period of time. There is the protean Picasso, plunging into every medium and style to produce an oeuvre of unparalleled variety and extent. And there is the failed Picasso, spending the last half of his life pouring out lesser works, with only occasional flashes of the immense talent and genius that had served him so well before the First World War. All are to some extent the true Picasso, and behind them all moves Picasso the conjurer. The Picasso who transforms nature into art before your very eyes. The Picasso who, thought to be in one place, turns out to be somewhere else entirely. Picasso the magician, ultimately so indistinguishable from the Picassos of legend, Picassos he helped create and assiduously nourished, that everything about him seems to evaporate in a puff of smoke. The substance on which all of this is based is Picasso's triumph and true worth. The insubstantiality into which it all evolves is his tragedy.

Pablo Ruiz Picasso was born in Málaga on 25 October 1881. The son of a painter, he was encouraged to draw and paint from his earliest childhood, and at the age of ten was enrolled in the School of Fine Arts in La Coruña, to which his family had moved. Here, he followed a traditional academic course, drawing from

[1] These observations are an outgrowth of the Picasso exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 22 May–30 September 1980. The catalogue is entitled *Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective*, introductions by William Rubin and Dominique Bozo, forewords by Richard E. Oldenburg and Hubert Landais. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. Distributed by the New York Graphic Society. $50.00; $19.95.

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plaster casts, until the family's removal to Barcelona in 1895. There, in the heady atmosphere of the intellectual and artistic center of fin-de-siècle Spain, Picasso began to draw from the model. By 1899 he was associating with the most advanced cultural circles in the city, which congregated at the cafe Els Quatre Gats, and becoming acquainted with French art. Aside from his drawings after plaster casts, which show the young Picasso concentrating on establishing outline and modulating in light and dark to project a sense of three-dimensional form, and from a masterful series of small drawn portraits of his father, which similarly emphasize contour and bony structure, the principal (and most telling) works of the time are two large paintings, *First Communion* (1895–96) and *Science and Charity* (1897). The former, which depends coloristically on a straightforward triad of black, white and red, is a thoroughly accomplished essay in Ingresque academicism that suggests the importance of profile to Picasso, notably in the face of the young communicant, a prefiguration of some of the classicising heads of his later years. *Science and Charity* is a more ambitious work, larger in size and scale and more complex in composition. More monochrome than *First Communion*, it similarly shows the artist concentrating on outline, notably in the broad contour defining the hand of the sick woman grasped by the doctor. The smudgy and over-active modeling of the wide expanse of bedsheet suggests an unwillingness or inability to handle broad, decorative effects that was to echo throughout Picasso's career.

In 1900, Picasso took his first trip to Paris, and during the next two years struck out in the various directions suggested to him by his resulting first-hand acquaintance with the most notable contemporary painting. A tendency toward impastoed, divisionist paint application and high-valued color, for instance, clearly indicates his awareness of Van Gogh. The most intense expression of this tendency is the 1901 *Death of Casagemas*, its profile head isolated against a brilliant red ground applied with the broadest of touches, and juxtaposed with an overscaled candle flame, blazing in harsh red, yellow, and green. Toulouse-Lautrec was also important to Picasso at this time, an influence that shows not only in his preference for music hall subjects, and in the rendering of such angular physiognomies as that at the extreme left of *French Cancan*, lit from below and stylized in just the way Lautrec treated Yvette Guilbert, but in the appearance of Lautrec's poster *May Milton* in

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the background of *The Blue Room* (1901). Picasso was at his best during 1900–01 when he permitted brilliant colors applied discretely and broadly to help him organize his compositions, as in the self-portrait *Yo Picasso.* Those pictures that attempt subtler effects, such as the *Woman in Blue*, in which both colors and brushstrokes are modulated into one another, suffer from a creamy vulgarity that confirms one's suspicion that Picasso's Spanish nature was more at home with the bold effects of Expressionism and Fauvism than with the more traditional and elegant delicacies of French painting. A dangerous tendency to allow a subject's expressive force (or ugliness), reinforced with strident color, to carry compositions at the expense of more painterly means, resulting in an uncomfortable bloating, is evident in the *Portrait of Gustave Coquiot.* For the moment, however, Picasso pursued quite another path, one first clearly suggested in the broadly-patterned, linear, and Beardsleyesque simplifications of the menu cover he had designed for Els Quatre Gats in 1899.

Late in 1901 and early in 1902 several portraits and pictures of clowns develop this art nouveau strain along somewhat Gauguinesque lines. Both *Two Saltimbanques* and *Harlequin* of 1901 present their human subjects against flattened and extremely shallow backgrounds, divided, in each case, into a decorated upper portion and a flat, monochrome lower portion representing the banquette on which the figures are sitting. In both pictures, a white tabletop establishes the foreground of the composition, sandwiching the figure between its largely unmodulated plane and that of the banquette. The figures themselves are carefully outlined, and their heads, hands, and hair are broadly stylized in a Synthetist manner. The hands, particularly in the *Two Saltimbanques*, are mannered, their tendril-like fingers playing a counterpoint to the broad areas of the other anatomy. The decorative flatness that characterizes these pictures is emphasized by the choice of subject, the clown's faces being naturally painted a chalky white, and their costumes providing a regular pattern that enhances the whole. The relatively large scale of the figures is successfully converted into large pictorial scale by the divided and broadly patterned grounds. Scale is something of a problem in the portraits of the same time, in which isolated figures, often black, are seen against uninflected grounds, generally blue. Picasso was not always able to make his silhouetted figures overcome the coloristic heaviness of their

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grounds, and while the portraits are further steps toward simplicity and flatness, they usually are not as successful pictorially as the compositions involving clowns.

During 1902 and 1903 Picasso built on his pictures of late 1901 to create the first of the styles for which he has to become famous—that of his Blue Period. Concentrating, as always, on the human figure, he turned from clowns to the socially oppressed for subjects. The pictures of these years tend toward monochrome, being worked out in dark and sombre blues, relieved sometimes by black, or by a blue so deep as to appear black, and sometimes by the off-white of flesh tones, which run to sallow yellow occasionally inflected with slight touches of pink. Giving up color allowed Picasso to concentrate all his energies on profile and ponderous form, and to solve some of the formal problems that had been plaguing him. In general, there is a tendency toward large scale in these works, and the portrait of *Celestina* enlarges its figure in relation to the format of the canvas in such a way as to make it pictorially more satisfying than the earlier portraits. Although *The Blindman's Meal* shows a single figure seated at a table in the manner of the earlier *Harlequin*, its figure more successfully dominates the composition, and the range of blues in which the picture is developed gives it greater, almost excessive, weight. The whole is relieved by touches of brown, particularly in the pitcher at the left. The culminating work of this style is *La Vie* (1903), an impressive attempt at a multi-figure, not to say allegorical, composition, which evidences at once the conventional nature of Picasso's training and ambitions and the unconventional language he developed to embody those ambitions. A nude couple at the left faces a mother and child at the right across a shallow space enlivened with what appear to be two paintings. All is carefully outlined, and the blue color scheme is kept from oppressiveness in this large canvas by being lightened in value and relieved by still lighter flesh tones. The Classical and abstracting stylizations of some of the features hint at what was to come, already suggested in the face of the young girl in *First Communion.* The iconic, columnar figures are manneristically lengthened, and the static, symmetrical composition is enlivened by the huddled figures in the background paintings, by the intertwining of the legs of the nude couple, and by the pointing gesture of the man's left hand. This successful attempt at countering the heaviness inherent in sculptural figures painted in dark-valued mono-

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chrome by ameliorating color and enlongating form points to the developments of the Pink Period, during which Picasso made a conscious attempt at elegance.

Picasso retained the human figure as a subject throughout 1904, 1905, and the first months of 1906, increasingly attempting mutli-figure compositions. For the first time, his art relaxes and one senses a more mature self-assurance than had previously manifested itself. Figures, as in *The Actor* (1904–05), become yet more elongated and more artificial in gesture, their extremities more angular. Color reappears in lightened and softened pinks, blues, and browns. Drawing becomes looser, less rigid, and the application of pigment more open and wash-like. All of this is apparent in the 1904 *Woman Ironing* which, despite its subject, projects a lyrical elegance. While the figure is carefully outlined, drawing begins to work itself free of form, notably in the linear patterns of the hair, and becomes more fluid. More obvious paint facture reappears in small applications of thinned pigment. At times, as in *The Acrobat's Family*, features seem to be drawn in on top of previously applied color, again indicating a trend for drawing to detach itself from contours and follow its own course. Occasionally, thinner paint application suggests gouache in its matteness, as in the 1905 *Two Acrobats with a Dog*, a picture in which the lyrical and evocative—almost dream-like—nature of Picasso's subject matter during these years manifests itself abundantly. This tendency reaches its qualitative peak in such pictures as *Boy with Pipe* and *Woman with a Fan*, each presenting a single figure worked out partially in blue against a neutral ground, enhanced in the former case with bouquets of pale flowers. The Classical regularity of the features, iconic but ambiguous gestures, large scale, lyrical drawing, and reticent colorism of these works give them a particular delicacy and force. In contrast, *Young Girl with Basket of Flowers* and the pictures with Dutch subjects of the same date show Picasso's worst side—unsubtle color, heaviness of form, and an almost van Dongen-like vulgarity that perhaps results from too-personal identification with the subjects and a consequent inability to achieve esthetic distance.

By early 1906, color was once again disappearing from Picasso's work, this time in favor of neutral browns and ochres, and figural stylization was being pushed considerably further. At first, this abstracting tendency continued to be delicate and Classical in feeling, as in the *Boy Leading a Horse* and the summary *La Toilette*, an

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almost Greek composition of a frontal female nude arranging her hair before a mirror held by a draped servant in full profile. As the year progressed, however, it became increasingly heavy, almost brutal, and one has the sense that something native in Picasso's nature was reasserting itself against acquired painterly finesse. In the *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* (1905–06) the writer is seated, draped in dark brown, the heavy, ungraceful forms of her body seen against a reddish brown ground brushed more openly than her garments. Stein's face has taken on the angular, mask-like appearance that was to characterize the features of Picasso's subjects for some time to come. The eyes, particularly, are stylized in that almond-shaped form to which the artist was so attracted. While *Two Nudes*, of the autumn of 1906, still retains traces of elegance in the standing figures seen against a dark ground, their forms described by neutral tones that change abruptly in value, *Seated Female Nude with Crossed Legs* of the same date exhibits the massive sculptural simplification toward which Picasso was moving. This tendency is summarized in a second *Two Nudes* (also 1906), in which two muscular, Rubensian women, their massive arms and breasts standing out from their simplified bodies, are developed in lighter tones of the ground color, making the canvas a monotone exercise relieved only by the dark brown of the hair. The features are starkly simplified, and the stylization of the curtain in the background hints at the Cubism Picasso was to develop within the following year. Picasso's mastery as a draftsman is amply demonstrated by his efforts in charcoal and pencil during this time. Their forms broadly simplified, carefully outlined, and delicately shaded internally, these sheets are among the finest drawings produced in this century.

During 1907 there was an almost volcanic eruption of crudity in Picasso's art, which, however, he was generally able to keep from falling into vulgarity. The natural tendency of his art, his underlying sensibility, and his discovery of African sculpture, all led him to coarsen and stylize his forms in a way that must have seemed scandalous at the time. He enlarged his scale further by bringing heads and figures forward to fill the entire composition, extending the forms of which they were composed outward to interlock with the ground so that they become one pictorial fabric. The angular faceting derived from African masks was emphasized by a broad, ungraceful drawing, and sequences of parallel lines and large areas of cross-hatching seem almost like scarification. In the technically

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unfinished, but enormously powerful, *Woman* of 1907, a broad linear pattern in blue and black describes with its broken calligraphy the oval and distorted forms of a face, as well as the angular and abstracted forms of breasts and arms. Color and hatching partly fill in these drawn contours, and partly move with a logic of their own behind them. *Nude with Raised Arms* pushes the same effects yet further, distorting the figure in proportion and feature, covering the canvas with intense, unlovely colors—principally browns, sometimes reddened, and greens—and in every way wrenching the esthetically viable from an aggressive and uncanonical combination of Picasso's Spanish heritage and daring, sometimes hostile, distortions derived from primitive art. The major statement of 1907 is, of course, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, a large, multi-figure composition in which the breakdown of human form is almost complete. Worked out in a relatively neutral palette dominated by flesh tones, middle value blues, and whites, with occasional intrusions of deep green and brown, the painting is the opening wedge of Cubism. While the human forms are mostly painted flat, the ground is faceted in such a way as to intrude upon the figures, and the whole suggests the dissolution of large scale organic form into component geometrical elements that was to revolutionize the art of the twentieth century. Although there are more fiercely distorted paintings from this time—the coruscated *Vase of Flowers*, for example—there is none more important in its implications.

Temporarily softening his effects, Picasso pursued several paths during 1908, a year that seems in retrospect merely the calm before the storm of his greatest achievement. One of those paths led him away from bringing his forms and colors ever further forward on the canvas toward developing ponderous forms in a shallow but perceptible depth. Typical of this trend is *Bowls and Jug*, which clearly delineates various rounded objects—fruit and bowls—in all their palpability on a narrow table. The solidity of the picture and its subjects, worked out in browns and red-browns, suggests a manner that was to serve Derain well, although it was of no further use to its discoverer. More interestingly, in pictures such as *Standing Nude* Picasso abstracted form still further. Carefully outlined shapes, rather like those in the 1907 *Woman*, are interlocked in an intricate pattern and distinguished one from the other in part by variation in hue, some being red-ochre, others blue. Pigment is brushed on in relatively small strokes, relieving the weight of the

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whole, as do occasional gaps in the paint surface that allow the primed canvas to show through. No distinction is made between the forms of the eponymous nude and those of the ground, and the entire composition takes on the air of a unitary assemblage of solid forms built up in a space partly identical with the plane of the canvas, partly behind it (the hue variation functioning sometimes as shading), and partly in front of it, an effect enhanced by the apparent bulging of the rounded anatomical shapes. The same spatial effects are exploited in *Three Women*, which points toward the third of Picasso's areas of exploration by being worked out in a Cézannesque green-ochre color combination. Since its colors are used at much closer value than those of the *Standing Nude*, *Three Women* is more subtly unified, even though its human forms are more carefully described and somewhat less integrated with the ground. Picasso's interest in Cézanne (and Cézannesque Impressionism) is clearly apparent in *The Dryad*, a picture that borrows the rich color scheme of the late Cézanne, ochre against a deep blue-green. The tendency of his own art apart, it is no accident that Picasso should have been influenced by Cézanne at this moment, for the great French painter had died in 1906 and been given a posthumous retrospective exhibition at the Autumn Salon of 1907. The 1909 *Portrait of Clovis Sagot*, an unusually restrained picture for Picasso at this time, is a direct paraphrase of Cézanne, not only in its colors and the planar breakup of the ground, but in the small and regular parallel strokes with which the paint is applied.

During late 1908 and 1909 Picasso devoted himself to reconciling his newly acquired knowledge of Cézanne with the results of his own pictorial explorations of 1907–08. He pursued the faceting of form, but using smaller-scaled and more geometrical units than the bold and erratic ones that had characterized his work heretofore. He shaded within the facets, clarifying their relations one to the other and introducing light and air into their interstices. He also restricted himself to a close-valued palette of brown, ochre, and green in his figures and still lives, and gray and ochre in his landscapes. Landscape, formerly a rarity in Picasso's art, came to the fore, and at Horta de Ebro in the summer of 1909 he applied his new formal means to the clearly defined geometrical shapes of the town itself to produce the series of canvases in which analytical Cubism is first clearly proclaimed. In the fall of the same year, in such pictures as *Woman with Pears*, and *Fan, Salt Box, and Melon*, Pi-

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casso reduced the size and multiplied the number of the facet planes used to describe the objects he represented, darkening his tones to reinforce the resulting density and complexity, and permitting the facets to open up into one another. The ultimate result, embodied in some of the most impressive and intellectually rigorous canvases of the twentieth century, was the appearance in 1911–12 of high analytical Cubism.

Picasso's most successful analytical Cubist pictures are characterized by an extreme density, produced by the intricate interplay of faceted forms opening into one another across the entire surface of the canvas, and by dark-valued and intense neutral hues. The latter are relieved by being shaded within the planes or across slightly larger areas, producing an effect of light and openness that is the ultimate legacy of Impressionism. When the light areas are too large and work to model entire objects rather than planes or small areas, as in the 1910 *Woman in an Armchair*, the picture may suffer. When, however, they are evenly spread across the canvas, as in *Woman*, they work to great advantage. Although Picasso's touch in the 1909 Horta de Ebro pictures had been light to the point of invisibility, his paint application rapidly became more distinct. At first consisting of longish, parallel strokes, it soon changed to small, clearly discrete, almost divisionist rectangles placed side by side. The culmination of this increasingly apparent touch comes in *The Accordionist* of 1911, where it assumes the character of an overall texture, controlling and unifying the composition. The space of analytical Cubism has often, and justifiably, been made much of. The linear patterns defining the facet planes, and providing an armature around which the applications of neutral color are built, are constructed as if they were made of wire, and their character as constructions is enhanced by the effect of light and air that the value variations weave around them. They seem to extend in front of the canvas on which they are painted, the more so if, as is often the case, they are not painted out to the edges or corners of the picture. Picasso shares the honor of this development with Braque, and although it is commonly observed that their analytical Cubist canvases cannot be told apart, one suspects that with the passage of time and the development of critical vision, Picasso's pictures will be distinguishable by their greater density and roughness, Braque's by a more refined color sense, tending toward softer grays and admixtures of brown, and by a less complex play of line in-

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volving the use of more parallel patterns. Be that as it may, both must be honored for effecting one of the most daring visual revolutions of their time.

It is astonishing to realize that Picasso was 29 at the time of analytical Cubism. During the previous decade he had radically changed his style every two years, creating three manners—Blue, Pink, and Cubist—that subsequently became world famous. He had, moreover, suppressed his native Spanish tendency toward expressionism to capture and absorb the most important painting of his time, that of France, transforming it in the process. All this was done with a fierceness and freneticism that must have been amazingly alien to the sophisticated Parisian milieu that was overcome by it.

In late 1911, Picasso painted *Man with Mandolin*, the lower third of which opens out into a larger-scaled planar structure that looks like a preliminary stage of the more tightly-knit upper portion of the painting. A short time later there appeared *Ma Jolie*, a composition in which both the facet planes and the paint applications used to fill them in broaden out, becoming fewer in number and more relaxed in organization. In this work the words of the title are actually painted at the bottom of the composition, their flat black establishing the picture plane in the most literal and unambiguous way. Throughout 1912 this tendency for the surface of the picture to assert itself continued, and the facet planes were often filled in, either with color or with a unified and larger-scaled application. Imitation caning, woodgraining, and similar textures appeared, and the facet planes tended to become regularly rectangular and to be arranged congruent with the edges of the canvas. By the end of the year, this trend had taken a technical turn in the appearance of collage. Planes were no longer drawn on canvas, but cut out and pasted on, overlapping and interlocking much in the manner of their painted counterparts. The major difference was that these applied papers had an opacity and individuality that demanded larger-scale presentation and consequent simplification of form. Compositions were, thus, literally built outward from the canvas, and the border between painting and sculpture had been reached. Insofar as collage developed into sculpture, it followed the path marked out by Picasso through the constructions of González and others to its present eminence in the products of Smith, Caro, etc. Insofar as it reformed painting, it took the course given it by Pi-

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casso during 1913–14. He spent the former year largely absorbed in collage and constructed sculpture, returning more purely to painting in the latter year and in 1915. *Man with a Guitar* of 1913, however, already announces the arrival of synthetic Cubism. Composed largely of flat planes of color overlapping in an intricate pattern, its drawing is not applied but results from the juxtapositions of the edges of the planes making up the picture. Some lettering is still present, but by the time of *Card Player* (1913–14) it was clear that the decorative function of lettering could and would be taken over by such regular patterns as those of wallpaper. *Card Player* also introduces stippled patterns used to relieve the opacity of the overlapping planes, to modulate between them, and to allow the picture to breathe. By the following year (1914), all of this had been transformed into a large scale in such pictures as *Portrait of a Young Girl*. Here, an intense green ground is animated with gaudy wallpaper patterns, large areas of stippling, and a good deal of drawing. The translucency of the stippling permits the ground behind the large planes to show through, and the composition is, thus, held firmly on the surface of the canvas and pictorial integrity is restored. In *Portrait of a Young Girl* the planar elements—stippled and patterned—that correspond to the facet planes of analytical Cubism do not for the most part interlock, but are spaced independently across the green ground. They are tied together by the color of that ground itself, as well as by a good deal of drawn form, reasserting the importance of color and pointing the way toward one of the most promising pictorial devices of the later twentieth century.

Picasso developed synthetic Cubism in two opposite directions during 1915. One of these, represented by *Man with a Pipe*, was something of an attempt to marry synthetic and analytical Cubism. Retaining the stippled and colored planes of the former, Picasso reduced them in size and arranged them in more complex patterns, recalling his work of five years earlier. The other, represented by *Harlequin*, broadened and simplified even further, reducing the number of planes and tending to make of them large scale decorative compositions. Although *Harlequin* succeeds, decorative effect was never Picasso's strength, and despite the fact that this was the more promising of the two paths he had begun to follow in 1915, he did not pursue it.

At about this time there began to appear certain ominous effects

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in Picasso's work. The upper left corner of the 1914–15 *Still Life with Cards, Glasses, and Bottle of Rum*, for example, is filled by a naturalistically painted curtain, the shaded forms of which weaken an otherwise taut synthetic Cubist canvas. Similarly, a small drawing of 1914 entitled *Reclining Woman and Guitar Player* trivializes analytical Cubist structure by softening its linear patterns, using handsome Ingresque curves to describe almost caricatural forms. For the first time, Picasso showed signs of turning his enormous technical capacities to ends that were artistically trivial. The 1917–18 *Peasant's Repast*, after LeNain, for example, is a basically academic rendering overlain with a largely meaningless pattern of Cubist stippling, the disjunction between the two being emphasized by the vaguely amused face staring at the beholder from the center of the canvas like a grotesque wink. Similarly, the drawing of the 1917 *Woman in Spanish Costume*, which is admittedly only underdrawing for an unfinished composition, displays an aimlessness and structurelessness that would have been wholly alien to the earlier Picasso. At the same time that these, and other, cracks appeared in Picasso's armor, he continued to produce successful synthetic Cubist pictures, as well as to draw to great effect. Until about 1915 his drawing had been directly related to his painting stylistically. After that date, it began to diverge substantially, becoming increasingly realistic and eventually distinctly neo-classical while at least some of his painting became increasingly abstract. By 1919 his academic training reasserted itself in drawings that place great emphasis on contour and the simplest possible description of form. Although this may in part be due to an awareness of Matisse's accomplishments as a representational draftsman, it seems more generally to have resulted from a desire to return to descriptive art, a desire that found outlet in his drawing before it did in his painting.

The years 1920 to 1922 represent the last sustained period of important qualitative achievement in Picasso's art. That achievement found expression in four quite distinct, and largely retrospective, ways. The first was in the creation of a quantity of fine pencil drawings, including a series of masterful portraits, many of them of people around Diaghilev. The second was in an apotheosis of synthetic Cubism, represented in the two versions of *Three Musicians* painted during 1921. Both masterfully executed, and adapting the broad, interlocking structure of color planes typical of synthetic

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Cubism to one of the circus subjects so dear to Picasso, they are qualitatively similar but different in detail. The version in Philadelphia, smaller and squarer in format and consequently more compact and lively in its forms, is probably the more successful. Third, Picasso turned to a series of neo-classical pictures that hark back to 1906. Fully as monumental as the earlier pictures, these represent nude or classically draped women in indeterminate, but shallow, spaces. Although their features are highly stylized, they are more realistic than the figures of 1906 in that their bodies are more thoroughly modeled in light and shade, and the colors in which they are rendered are softer and more flesh-like. Most of these paintings are without strong color, which is detrimental to them (*Dancing Couple*), the figures being light-valued pink, white, or ochre against darker brown or gray grounds. Occasionally, the figures approach the pneumatic. Finally, in a reinterpretation of his style of 1905, Picasso created several pictures that are lyrical in theme and execution. Although by no means uniformly successful—*Pablo on a Donkey* (1923), is stiff and uninspired—the best of them are quite fine. *Mother and Child* (1922), for example, has a ground more like watercolor than oil in effect, thinly brushed in pale blue, green, pink, and brown. The figures are drawn over this ground in a free, sometimes awkward but always convincing, calligraphy, and the result is a composition of great delicacy and thoroughgoing pictorial strength.

In the middle 1920s Picasso's art became possessed by a stridency that was never to leave it. Although there were isolated pictures of great accomplishment from then on, sustained intensity and qualitative consistency were gone forever. This stridency partly took the form of brilliant color. Never a subtle colorist, Picasso increasingly depended on saturated hues that seldom benefited his pictures, particularly when applied in large areas. Partly, also, it was evidenced in angular and aggressive forms and, occasionally, in textures introduced into the paint. Although each of these devices had appeared previously in his art, they had been used in moderation and within the context of a pictorial structure to which they were necessary or which was strong enough to contain them. Now, Picasso's structure weakened, forms became rounded, and the devices of synthetic Cubism were used for superficially decorative rather than structural ends. The general impression conveyed by many of the pictures of the last half of Picasso's

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life is that they are a form of exhibitionism, created to display a virtuosity no longer grounded in esthetic necessity. In sum, a vulgarity that was always part of his sensibility expressed itself as crudeness rather than as convincing forcefulness. In this respect, it is interesting to compare Picasso with Miró, who shares his vulgar side but has more frequently been able to turn it to the advantage of his art. Moreover, although both Miró and Picasso learned the French manner, Miró had native gifts as a colorist denied Picasso and was, therefore, able to make use of French painting in a way that his compatriot could not. When he reacted against it, for example, he still had its gifts at his command. However that may be, it is clear that Miró's qualitative accomplishment has been more sustained than Picasso's and that he has been blessed with an ability to transform the materials of life into those of art more consistently than Picasso.

Picasso's best paintings of the middle and later twenties are those most dense in construction, in which a multitude of forms are carefully interlocked and color and texture are dispersed throughout the composition, as in *Studio with Plaster Head* (1925). He even occasionally brings off a broad, decorative composition, particularly when he permits his vulgarity to show through rather than trying to conceal it beneath a layer of apparent finesse (*Musical Instruments on a Table*, 1926). The 1928 *Minotaur*, its fantastic linear figure outlined against a broad neutral ground with an incursion of blue, is clearly a successful reflection of Miró's great abstracting decorations of the mid-1920s. Not so successful, particularly when compared with its majestic prototype, is *The Swimmer* of 1929, derived from Matisse's earlier Russian decorations and depicting a pinkish distorted human form floated against an inflected blue ground. Always concerned with the palpable object, Picasso devoted a good deal of time around 1930, and, indeed, thereafter, to sculpture, and from time to time a painting that seems to be a simple depiction of a piece of sculpture turned out successfully. *Seated Bather* (1930) is such a work, its osseous structure reflecting Surrealism, its ponderousness relieved by the figure's openness and simplified forms and by the light blues of the beach-sea-sky against which it is seen. Picasso turned strident color and rounded form to superb effect in the 1932 *Girl Before a Mirror*, in part by building the picture up out of a series of small patterns that dispersed the color. Also, color is used here as line, rather than being enclosed within

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line. The careful containment of the two forms and their physical presence as they stand out from the diapered ground adds to the density and strength of the work. Although the color in this particular picture is unsubtle, depending on such juxtapositions as red-yellow and blue-orange, it is by no means lacking in impact.

Generally speaking, Picasso's progress during the 1930s was a slow descent into ever more obvious effects. His figures tended to become bloated, and the application of paint describing them increasingly creamy, impastoed, and lacking in structural or pictorial justification. A kind of freneticism, followed by an anguished fierceness, took possession of his painting, as if he were clutching at shock value to redeem his art. A great deal of the anguish apparent in his work in the later '30s refers, of course, to the state of Spain, and, increasingly, to that of the world, and it reaches a climax in the *Guernica*, created in 1937. Among the most difficult of pictures to consider dispassionately even now, it was, and still is, carried in large part by its message. It will no doubt survive for some time, perhaps indefinitely, on that account, its interest becoming increasingly documentary—documentary of a human emotion more than an event—as its esthetic weaknesses become increasingly apparent. Although filled with meaningless drawing and unsatisfactory formal relationships, *Guernica* is not altogether a failed painting. Perhaps realizing what his color would do to a composition of *Guernica's* size and complexity, Picasso wisely worked it out entirely in tones of black, white, and gray. He was, moreover, able to maintain monumental scale throughout the work, and to adapt the means of Cubism successfully to that scale in at least parts of the picture. But the overinflation and flabbiness of form that penetrated others of his pictures is not absent from *Guernica*, and, impressive as it is, it fails to transform human into esthetic emotion. It is, in a sense, a contemporary European equivalent of Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware.* Unhappily, Picasso felt obliged to create several such patriotic or political set pieces, each more meaningless than the last—*The Charnel House* (1944–45), *Massacre in Korea* (1951)—as well as other large scale compositions which crumble for lack of powerful, governing form—*Women at Their Toilet* (1938), *Night Fishing at Antibes* (1939). The more ambitious his pictures during the latter part of his career, the more thoroughly they seem to fail. This may be because his ambitions increasingly expressed themselves not pictorially but politically and

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in terms of personality, and because he relished the romantic role of necromancer thrust upon him by an admiring world limited in its comprehension of what he had accomplished.

The painting of Picasso's last thirty years, as opposed to his drawing, which managed to maintain some strength, increased in aimless agitation and antic distortion, caught up in its own conceits and devoid of inner necessity. Only occasionally does an individual work of real quality surface, and sometimes one finds a picture so extravagantly theatrical that it seems to succeed in spite of itself. *Man with an Ice Cream Cone* of 1938 is such a work, its brilliant blue, yellow, red, and green applied in clearly defined touches against a black ground. By contrast, *Woman Dressing her Hair* (1940) exhibits an unaccustomed coloristic subtlety. The figure itself, grotesquely distorted but broadly conceived and executed, sits on a rich purple floor within an olive green enclosure. Handsome, reticent and accomplished, the picture makes one wonder what provoked its creation, or why it did not open an avenue for Picasso that might have led on to better things. Vivid linearism was always helpful to Picasso's pictures, and his copy of Courbet's *Women on the Banks of the Seine* (1950) takes strength from its intricate linear patterns, many of which are meaningless in relation to the original but helpful in terms of Picasso's copy. The fact that color is not applied in broad areas or modulated in its application, but used as line and laid down flat, gives strength to this handsome picture. There is, indeed, no better work between its creation and Picasso's death in 1973, and it demonstrates how helpful compositional, preferably linear, clarity, straightforward color, and the construction of large compositions from relatively small forms were to the mature Picasso. The opacity that also benefited his work would normally suggest the talents of a decorative painter, such as Matisse, but in Picasso's case real emotions came to dominate esthetic ones, depriving him of the detachment necessary to the execution of grand decorations and necessitating smaller scale to keep those emotions within bounds. If one cannot fail to honor Picasso for having been among the greatest twentieth century painters and pioneers of painting, one must regret that he was a victim of his own facility, falling into premature esthetic senility rather than, like Matisse, finding a new late flowering by following the inexorable logic of his art.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Artisans of Space[1]

WORLD WAR II PUT AN END to the fruitful and popular strain of modern dance that had grown up in Germany and Eastern Europe over two decades. The anti-German feeling that accompanied the war, and the pains of dispersion, destruction, and economic recovery that followed it, have blurred whatever traces remained of that period's dance discoveries. Now they all come under the label of German Expressionism, which was never very accurate in the first place. Although the Germans have a term for the modern dance, *ausdruckstanz*—dance of expression, even its practitioners couldn't all agree on it. Some called it the free dance, some the new artistic dance. When I started studying the 1920s and '30s intensively, I realized that at least two approaches to dance prevailed, approaches related by their common cultural environment but quite different in other respects.

While the dancers we think of as Expressionists—like Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss, Harald Kreutzberg—were trying to devise dance forms to project the feelings arising out of the political and psychic struggles of the time, others were working more theoretically, trying to define how the human body works within its physical element, space. Both Rudolf Laban, the chief teacher of Wigman and the others, and Oskar Schlemmer, head of the Theater of the Bauhaus, tried to understand the properties of movement and extend its imagery. They were, if anything, anti-expressionists, in that they thought dancing could have meaning beyond the power exerted over it by the individual dancer's personality or by subjective, post-romantic delvings into the soul of society.

The 19th century's discoveries in science and technology had torn Europe from its rural, Christian-monarchist moorings. By virtue of his presumed relationship to an all-powerful God, man had imagined himself at the top of the evolutionary heap. But Darwin and Freud and Einstein took away this confidence in man's ultimate control. World War I, according to theater director Erwin Piscator, proved that "bourgeois individualism was finally buried. . . . Those who returned no longer had any relationship to the greatness of man which had served as the symbol of the eternity of divine order in the parlors of pre-war society." While the artists of the early 20th century had been casting about for new connections or further disrupting order with their futuristic rages, by the 1920s, art was beginning to come to terms with the machine. The question no longer was how to hang on to the rusty anchorages of the past, or how to find substitute gods, but how to habituate oneself to an industrialized world.

[1] This article is based on the third of eight lectures on twentieth-century dance that were given by Marcia B. Siegel during the fall of 1980 as part of a three-year program on "The Meanings of Modernism" at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

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Walter Gropius chose to make peace with this world now forever beyond man's domination: "The old dualistic world-concept which envisaged the ego in opposition to the universe is rapidly losing ground. In its place is rising the idea of a universal unity in which all opposing forces exist in a state of absolute balance." The Bauhaus school, which Gropius founded in 1919, attempted to unify technology with the arts and crafts, to create new symbols for a new consciousness, and to see what activity was possible within a fabricated environment. The Bauhaus artists, like the Cubists and the Constructivists who were working elsewhere in Europe, rejected aestheticism as a premise; they didn't want to flee this world even if it defied their previous perceptions of motion, velocity, time, distance, continuity. They wanted to incorporate their product into what was clearly an inescapable set of new realities.

If we look at the Cubist paintings of Picasso, at the exploded theater designs of the Russians, at the mosaic patterns of art deco objects, we see how visual artists were wrestling with these new dislocations of accepted order. Form is fractured, splintered, and blown into scattered fragments. The certitudes of the horizon line and its perpendicular coordinates have been shaken loose, tilted, sprung out of plumb. The representational figure against a landscape is no longer the subject of modern painting; the artist is working with manipulations of line, composition and color, unencumbered by ornament. The color harmonies of Kandinsky, the floating shapes of Calder and Arp, the optical studies of Albers, the severe, formal graphics of Mondrian, the disembodied but meticulously placed forms of Malevich and Moholy-Nagy all represent a hunger for basics, for truths that are deep enough not to give way. By carefully placing the human figure within these geometries, the artist might make reason out of a confusing universe.

Working in the theater, the Constructivists made intricate, nonliteral environments that would force actors and dancers to move in unaccustomed ways, and that could be manipulated by the performers into new configurations. It was literally a theater of structure, where the audience was encouraged to see the inner mechanisms of the stage as well as its magical outer appearances. Some of the Constructivist designs actually look overbuilt, as if the artists were saying that a universe increasingly complicated, multiplied, or blasted apart could still be real, could still be substantial enough to support activity. The fact that this period saw the widespread use of aircraft, automobiles, elevators, photography and motion pictures, all of which cause us to perceive the properties of space in new ways, probably explains, at least in part, how the actor came to be placed in such strangely altered theatrical spaces.

Pavel Tchelitchev's *Ode,* produced in 1928 for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, with Leonide Massine as choreographer, employed several real and illusionary devices to create unusual spatial relationships. The basic set was a web of tapes radiating from a central vertical support, and a row of dolls constructed in false perspective which were later to be joined by live dancers dressed the same way. In one section of the ballet, dancers plied the tapes to make what the English critic A. V. Coton called "a geo-

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metric succession of moving, Euclidean forms about which the figures wove a complementary notation of space-images." At this period, Tchelitchev was especially interested in light, and *Ode* had many effects created by shadows, colors, projections, and even a dance on a blacked-out stage (a non-space) where the dancers wore tiny flashlights on their heads. Film was also a part of this production, including blown-up images of flowers. To enhance the clarity of these designs, Massine concentrated on uncluttered, linear movement for the dancers. To the critic Cyril Beaumont, *Ode* "suggested a kind of visual 'laying bare' of the intelligence at work."

At the other end of this conceptual track were those who tried to clear the theater space of everything except the basic architecture for a plastic flow of individuals and massed groups of performers. Having no stylistic or symbolic relationship to the play in themselves, these scenic elements simply offset the space, made it more visible, as a picture frame or a window does. The Berlin theater director Leopold Jessner's most notable of many such designs was the so-called Jessner Stairs, a graduated series of levels that could be placed anywhere on stage and on which the actors could be ranged in varied groupings. The stairs were well-suited to the intentions of German choreographers, who used them to add height and depth to their group designs. An early use of the stairs in this country was seen in Irene Lewisohn's 1930 production of Charles Martin Loeffler's *Pagan Poem*, with Martha Graham and Charles Weidman in the leading roles. A few years later, Doris Humphrey and Weidman adopted the idea of unadorned boxes and platforms as the basic scenic modules for all their company's dances.

Finally, there was an interest, particularly at the Bauhaus, in the theater as a space for the audience as well as the performers. Schlemmer's Bauhaus Stage at Dessau was a flexible producing space, a modest, practical beginning to what the Bauhaus designers visualized as a total space—indoors and out—in which the play of space, body, line, point, color, light, and sound could be experienced in new perspectives by the audience. Schlemmer even saw the Dessau Bauhaus building, with its clean planes of masonry and glass, its flat roofs and projecting balconies, as a potential stage—anticipating the urban environmental dance that took place in this country 40 years later.

Schlemmer had been trained as a painter and sculptor, but even before he began his association with the Bauhaus in 1920 he had produced an early version of his most famous work, the *Triadic Ballet.* Schlemmer viewed the stage as a composition on canvas, and the dancer within it as a draftsmanlike arrangement of forms, colors, lines and volumes, obedient to the laws of space as well as the internal laws of human functioning. He wanted to create abstraction from this tangible set of raw materials, and he suggested four basic ways in which natural laws could be applied to transforming the human body. Encased in boxlike constructions it could become "ambulant architecture." If the body's basic shapes and divisions were emphasized, he imagined a marionette. The possibilities for motion in space, the body's capacity for rotation, direction, and cutting through space, could produce a "technical organism." And images could be devel-

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oped from the symbolic associations he saw in the body's form, such as the star shape of the spread hand or the cross of shoulders on spine, creating "dematerialization."

Even costumes that extended these properties couldn't completely free man from the laws of gravity, but Schlemmer advocated any technical means in the theater that would create the illusion of such freedom, including the use of mechanical figures. In his theater experiments he utilized both the concept of the Übermarionette, the mechanical doll, and of the Kunstfigur, the human figure used as art object.

He and the other theater workshop members at the Bauhaus put these theories into action first of all by the use of costume. The literal, personifying aspects of the performer were hidden under molded, twisted, padded and built-up materials that were fitted to the body so that the dancer, by moving, could create superhuman shapes and effects. Props and masks could further exaggerate the size and reach of the body's parts. Lighting and projections could change the mood and even the environment itself.

Mensch und Kunstfigur (*Man and Mask*), a remarkable film made in Germany in 1968, combines nine reconstructed, brief Schlemmer dances with some understated but apt cinematic devices that further his ideas of transcending mundane spatial experience. Although there is little conventional dancing here, the performer has to be acutely conscious of how he is surrounding, penetrating and shaping himself in space and with relation to the other performers. The imagery has considerable range, even among these simple pieces. Some are directly satirical. In the *Gesture Dance,* three masked, padded personages enact minimal conversations, changing the emotional implications with variations in the tilt of the body or head, the extending or withdrawing of a hand. In *Game of Bricks,* a similarly dressed trio move one-and-a-half-foot cubes into different formations, suggesting individuality, competition and finally conformity. In *Form Dance,* the purpose seems more abstract, as the figures place various props—poles, a large white sphere, a small metal ball—into positions that resemble the paintings of another Bauhaus teacher and frequent collaborator at the theater workshop, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. In other pieces, the body seems to disappear entirely. Clad in black against a black background, the dancer manipulates handfuls of white hoops in graduated sizes to create disembodied op art designs (*Hoop Dance*), or moves long poles attached to his limbs to make moving geometric designs (*Stick Dance,* which Schlemmer called "a song of the joints").

Looking at the Schlemmer work, with its percussion, prepared piano and synthesized sounds, its eerie yet concrete interplay of forms and voids, one can indulge in fantasy or simply in sensory entertainment. A student of the Bauhaus stage, Alfredo Bortoluzzi, remembered it years later as having had the aim of "bringing movement and picture into a firm harmonic relationship."

Rudolf Laban, the other great theorist of space, didn't think of pictures at all, even though he too had more of a background in the visual arts than in dance. Laban worked outward from inside the person. If space is

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a limitless something that surrounds us and that is filled with other people and objects related to us by their size, distance and proportions, then space itself changes according to the way we move in it. "Space is a hidden feature of movement and movement is a visible aspect of space," Laban said in the introduction to his book on space theory, *The Language of Movement.*

Starting from the physical structure of the body as a vertical being with two sides, a front and a back, Laban defined the space around the body—an expandable envelope called the kinesphere—according to different sets of directional possibilities. The pure vertical, horizontal and sagittal axes correspond to up-down, side to side and forward-back motion. The diagonal inclinations between these pure dimensions could be schematized to form a cube, by connecting with straight lines the arms-reach terminus of each diagonal. Other directional systems could be plotted in the same way and formed into other imaginary geometric structures. Laban then worked out progressions of movement through these crystals—scales, swings, and spirals that formalize movement much as ballet exercises do, but that orient movement always to the space outside the dancer's body rather than retaining the ballet dancer's internal reference points of body axis, position of the limbs, placement of the head and so on.

Laban was also concerned with the dynamics of movement—the source and variation of the energy flow that activates movement, and that creates individual phrasing and patterns of action. He thought that certain dynamic tendencies were related to certain space tendencies—that, for example, advancing in space is more normally associated with the aggressive properties of force and speed, while retreating has an affinity with the indulgent qualities of slowness and spreading-out of energy. Even if one doesn't agree with his theory of affinities, Laban's clarification of the movement process as a dialogue between the body and space almost forces the dancer into an expressive mode.

Laban spoke of spatial tension existing within the body as it moves off its vertical axis and into the more precarious sideward or backward diagonals, and he built into his scales and progressions different forms for easing or heightening these tensions. When people worked together, in pairs or groups, the spatial tension took on a collective dynamic; it could be strengthened if many bodies felt it together, or an element of contrast could be introduced with opposing movement tendencies. Rhythm could add another dramatic element. In other words, Laban worked for the same kinds of theatrical effects as theater directors always had, but he worked almost entirely from the moving body as a source of feeling, and concerned himself less about what the audience would see.

Although he did choreograph for the stage, Laban used these ideas most effectively in his movement choirs. These were groups of people, often laypersons or children, who moved together to develop a common theme. The aim was not to show a formal, uniform technique or design, but for each participant to reinforce the collective drive by expressing the motive or spirit with his own movement. It seems to me the movement

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choirs grew out of a national passion for physical activity on a large social scale—gymnastics, sports, folk dancing and hiking groups also spread over Germany during the '20s and '30s. The Nazis turned this craze to their own account, even politicizing dance groups with sympathetic leaders. It's hard to understand how a humanitarian like Laban could have ignored the growing militarism and repression, but apparently until just before the Munich Olympics of 1936 he was unaware of the propaganda value the "movement movement" could have for the Nazis.

It was Laban who engineered the stupendous pageant that opened the 1936 Games, in which 10,000 youths created a mass celebration of teutonic ideals: motherhood, physical health, heroism, and love of the fatherland. Perhaps he merely saw it as the most fabulous movement choir of all. Realizing its political intent at the last minute, Laban withdrew before the pageant was presented, but he continued to work in Germany until 1938, when he left for England. Schlemmer too was reluctant to leave his homeland. His work was declared decadent and he was dismissed from the Bauhaus in 1933, shortly before the Nazis closed that institution. From then on he worked in semi-obscurity, and died in 1943 at Baden-Baden.

World War II swept away all of this creative activity, and many of its artifacts were either confiscated by the Nazis or destroyed in the fighting. After Europe had rebuilt its land and its economy in the '50s, the dance gained a new but conservative foothold in the opera houses. The curiosity, the idealism and the adventurousness—and the dissatisfactions—that had prompted the modern dance went dormant; it seems the Germans did not even want to be reminded of the experiments of the recent past.

Laban continued to work in exile, turning his attention more and more to analysis of work movement, and his very active heirs in England and the U.S. are pursuing his theories in dance education and movement analysis rather than theater. The most important legatee, paradoxically of both Schlemmer and Laban, is Alwin Nikolais. Trained by Mary Wigman's disciple in America, Hanya Holm, he inherits his movement approach from Laban, but his theatrical methods are all Schlemmer. Nikolais often speaks of his intention to show man as "kinsman to the universe," and his total theater pieces, with their "dehumanized" dancers blending into fantasy environments created by lighting projections, props and electronic sound, are a continuing journey into the territory laid out by Schlemmer, employing the technical resources of a space age even Schlemmer may not have imagined.

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ROBERT ASAHINA

Theatre Chronicle

"THE MAIN THING . . . IS NOT TO BE THEATRICAL." So Anton Chekhov advised the cast and crew of *The Sea Gull* before its premiere in St. Petersburg in 1896. "Everything must be simple . . . completely simple. . . . " Yet his advice seems to have been lost on Andrei Serban, whose staging of *The Sea Gull* for Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival at the Public Theater is anything but simple—although at times it verges on the simple-minded.

To be sure, Serban's notorious 1977 production of *The Cherry Orchard* should have given fair warning of how little regard the director has for authorial intention. Although Chekhov himself called it a "comedy in four acts," there is no reason to believe that he intended *The Cherry Orchard* to be the farce that Serban staged. Now Serban has turned to Chekhov's other self-described "comedy," the first of his four major plays, and the playwright of delicate indirection is mangled once more by the master of gross misdirection.

In the first three acts, Serban seems determined yet again to interpret subtle satire as coarse clownishness. The empty posturings of Chekov's absurdly self-important characters—the has-been or would-be artists forever doomed to second-rate status; the pining romantics in the throes of unrequited love—are not even permitted the dignity of pathos. No, Serban must turn every gesture, every word into buffoonishness. At the beginning of Act II, when the lovesick Masha (Pamela Payton-Wright) complains that her life seems to drag on endlessly, Serban has her clump about, her stoop-shouldered trudging corresponding in the most literal-minded way to her lines. Moments later, when the faded star Arkadina (Rosemary Harris) flatters herself into boasting that she could still play a girl of 15, Serban has her dance a jig to prove it—and then has her collapse in a near faint to show us that she really could not.

These hijinks are compounded by Michael H. Yeargan's set, which has the effect of making even the simplest movements on stage ridiculously complicated. The foreground consists of polished blond wood planks, like something out of a natural foods restaurant, that variously represent the lakeside of Sorin's estate in Act I, the croquet lawn in Act II, the dining room of the family house in Act III and the study in Act IV. A low bridge, also blond wood, stretches across the background in Acts I and II and doubles as what appears to be a porch outside the French windows in Acts III and IV. What two points are supposed to be connected by the structure remains something of a mystery throughout the play; sometimes it seems to span the unseen lake (which also inexplicably changes location from scene to scene and even line to line); at other times it appears to cross an unspecified inlet.

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In any event, this *pons* permits the *asinus* Serban two planes of action and thus adds to the farcical confusion. When the aspiring writer Konstantin (Brent Spiner) first espies his "vision of delight," the novice actress Nina (Kathryn Dowling), he circles away from both her and the audience—instead of immediately flying straight to her arms—just so they can meet and embrace halfway across the bridge in the background. There they pause, silhouetted against the sky like Garbo and Gilbert in a publicity pose for a silent-screen romance, before returning to the foreground to pick up the conversations that had been left dangling in their absence. Later, in Act III, when the bridge has transmogrified into the veranda, Serban repeats the embrace (complete with a setting sun)—this time between Nina and her seducer, Trigorin (Christopher Walken), who will betray Arkadina for the younger actress. These contrasting images of the two different sides of the love triangle are indeed striking, yet they embody both the romanticism that Chekhov satirized and the "theatricality" that he warned against.

By the final act, Serban has toned down the theatrics somewhat, but the absurdities of staging still continue. True, Act IV does contain one of the least graceful stretches of writing in the play: Konstantin's account of Nina's affair with Trigorin, the death of the illegitimate child she bore him, the failure of her acting career, and her incipient madness. Unfortunately, rather than alleviating the clumsiness of this exposition, Serban exaggerates it by arranging the characters in a semicircle around the fireplace, where they huddle at Konstantin's feet and listen to his tale like cowboys at a campfire. Still, some of the pathos of the characters' helpless inertia and irresponsibility does at last begin to emerge, although by this time the Chekhovian strategy of subordinating plot to characterization has long since been lost; the offstage gunshot that ends Konstantin's life and the play is milked by Serban for all the melodrama that Chekhov tried to avoid.

Since Serban's conception of the Chekhovian universe is so askew, it is almost pointless to talk about the acting; the general mediocrity of the cast is perfectly suited to this perverse enterprise in which all aspects of the production are secondary to the director's wrongheadedness. Still, Spiner must be singled out for playing Konstantin with a nasality and adolescent awkwardness that belong more to the actor than to the character, no matter how callow a youth he is supposed to be. And so must F. Murray Abraham be faulted for playing Dr. Dorn, surely one of Chekhov's most self-effacing and sympathetic characters, with all the charm of Vince Edwards playing Dr. Ben Casey.

A much better glimpse of Chekhov's world is provided by Lanford Wilson, who is, along with Sam Shepard, the most gifted active American playwright. In *The Fifth of July*, he offers us a slice of undistilled Americana—life in contemporary Lebanon, Missouri—but the structure of the drama and the characterizations are pure Chekhov.

As it did the Ranevskys in *The Cherry Orchard,* the proposed sale of the Family estate has brought the Talleys together in *The Fifth of July.* The

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matriarch of the clan, Sally Friedman (Mary Carver), was the young Sally Talley who married Matt Friedman 33 years before (in Wilson's 1980 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Talley's Folly*, set earlier in time but written after *The Fifth of July*, the first in the playwright's projected cycle of plays about the Missouri family). It is now the fourth and fifth of July, 1977; Matt has been dead for a year; and Sally is at last planning, along with the sale of the house, a ceremony that will include sprinkling his ashes into the nearby river.

The prospective purchasers are Gwen and John Landis (Swoosie Kurtz and Jonathan Hogan)—she a copper heiress, "33 and burned out," who is also an aspiring rock singer; he the ever-accommodating husband, eager to encourage her dreams with her own money and anxious to provide her with an accompanist, Wes Hurley (Danton Stone), and a recording studio, which he plans to construct in the 19-room Talley house after buying it. Fifteen years ago in Berkeley, Gwen and John had been the roommates and lovers, hetero- and homosexual, of Sally's nephew and niece, Ken and June Talley (Christopher Reeve and Joyce Reehling). June, an embittered ex-radical, is now the mother of 14-year-old Shirley (Amy Wright), who just might be John's illegitimate daughter. Ken, crippled in Vietnam and fitted with wooden legs, is now a sneering recluse living on the family estate with his male lover, Jed (Jeff Daniels).

Wilson skillfully orchestrates these eight spiritually dispossessed characters in a poetic meditation about the tension between the cynicism born of frustrated youthful ideals and the optimism needed for a family to endure in spite of adversity. The communal family that Gwen, John, Ken, and June created in Berkeley dissolved along with many other dreams of the decade, and Ken has chosen not to pass on the Talley name. Yet, in the end, he chooses not to pass on the family house, either, and the clan will continue in the person of Shirley, whose very illegitimacy ironically makes her "the last of the Talleys," the proud bearer of the family name.

In its original production by the Circle Repertory Company on Sheridan Square, *The Fifth of July* was an inspired example of ensemble performance, the delicate marriage of a carefully balanced cast and a beautifully modulated script. Unfortunately, the current Broadway production is much inferior. Although both versions were directed by Marshall W. Mason, and five of the eight roles were filled by the same actors, the new production has lost the appeal of the old.

For one thing, the Broadway version is playing on a much larger stage to a much larger house. A certain intimacy has been sacrificed, and a grossness of action and dialogue has crept in. The bigger set encourages more activity, much of it frenzied and unnecessary, and the bigger hall means louder voices and longer pauses to allow for audience reaction. Since Wilson has written some very funny throwaway lines, either they get lost in the laughter or else protracted and unnatural silences interrupt what should be spontaneously flowing dialogue. And the few but important changes in the text seem to have been meant to accommodate the perhaps less sophisticated Broadway audience. In Greenwich Village,

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nothing at all was made of Ken's homosexuality; the play began *in medias res,* and it gradually became apparent that he and Jed were lovers. On Broadway, the play conspicuously opens with lines establishing their relationship, almost as if honesty to the point of bluntness were the best policy.

The real problem, however, is in the casting changes. To be sure, Carver acts as well as Helen Stenborg did in the role of Sally. But the performances of Reeve and Kurtz unbalance the ensemble—he by underplaying, she by overplaying. Kurtz is a talented comedienne, but she portrays Gwen as a brassy hustler instead of a neurotic heiress desperately in need of masculine support. And as the key character of Ken, Reeve (better known as a man of steel than one with wooden legs) fails to display the acid bitterness of self-contempt that William Hurt wallowed in so well in the original production. Hurt's Ken was a man rubbing salt into his own open wounds and hating the world for it; Reeve's is simply a sullen, leaden lump. When he finally begins to show some emotion in the last scene, the whole structure of the drama has been subtly but significantly distorted. No longer a Chekhovian universe of tenuous connections among characters who understand themselves even less than they do others, *The Fifth of July* has been turned into a melodrama about the redemption of Ken. Will his wooden soul exhibit any more signs of life than his legs? Not exactly the question at the heart of the original version, which could perhaps be faulted for a slightly unearned optimism about the fate of the Talley family, but never for a grossly undisguised sentimentality about its troubled hero.

There is little sentimentality to be found in Athol Fugard's *A Lesson from Aloes*, a searing three-character drama that has been receiving rave reviews—to my mind undeserved. The trio includes the Afrikaner Piet Bezuidenhout (Harris Yulin), a one-time farmer now living in Port Elizabeth, South Africa; his wife, Gladys (Maria Tucci), of English descent; and his best friend and comrade-in-arms in the struggle against *apartheid*, Steve Daniels (James Earl Jones), a "colored" bricklayer who has only recently been freed after spending six months in jail for violating a "banning order" that prohibited him from attending meetings, participating in a trade union, or holding a passport.

The year is 1963. As the Bezuidenhouts prepare in Act I for a reunion with Steve, we gradually learn of the tensions that are tearing apart their marriage. Embittered by his long and fruitless struggle, Piet has become a near-hermit, shunned by his former friends and preoccupied with the raising of a garden full of aloes, the prickly native plants that yield a bitter purgative and survive even in the arid veldt. Gladys, who has recently returned home after being institutionalized, lives on the edge of hysteria; it seems that her mental collapse had been precipitated by a Special Branch raid, instigated by her husband's activism, during which Piet allowed the policemen to read and seize her personal diaries.

Steve arrives at the beginning of Act II, and it is soon apparent that

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things are not as they once were between the former allies. He too has dropped out of the struggle, but unlike Piet, he plans to leave the country for England. And as the reunion progresses, it becomes clear that, although Steve is uncertain, the others in the freedom movement are convinced that Piet was the traitor responsible for Steve's imprisonment.

There can be no doubt that Fugard means us to be as deeply involved as he is with his characters' fates; for years he has been heroically exposing the cost of *apartheid* in human suffering. Yet it is not his sincerity but his art that I question; for all its deep wells of feeling, which Fugard is not afraid to tap unembarrassedly, *A Lesson from Aloes* is a confused and ultimately artificial drama.

Too much of the characters' behavior is ill-motivated. Why should the Special Branch's confiscation of her diaries drive Gladys to a mental hospital? How can she possibly compare the "violation" of her privacy to literal rape ("I might as well have lain there in my bed, lifted my nightgown, and given them each a turn")? And why does Piet go into seclusion and allow his former comrades to blame him for Steve's arrest?

If he hadn't, of course, there would be no dramatic mainspring to propel us into Act II. Yet I can't help thinking that Fugard has simply fallen back on what might be called the Arthur Miller ploy. Just as John Proctor allowed himself to be executed in *The Crucible* for something he was not (a witch) because of his remorse over something he was (an adulterer), Piet permits the others to think him guilty of betrayal because he feels responsible for his wife's condition. But this is the kind of implausible behavior that occurs only on stage. Why should Piet accept Gladys' blame for the consequences of the raid, when he clearly was in no position to do anything about it—and when she must have been unstable in the first place to allow it to affect her so?

What all the furious denunciation and counter-denunciation in *A Lesson From Aloes* adds up to is little more than the familiar dramatic strategy of recriminations leading to revelations—a scheme that effectively bares a past obscured by the present, but does little to move the play into the future. Perhaps this was Fugard's intention, to show the absence of any future; the bitter irony of his setting such a hopeless situation in 1963, knowing full well that things have not improved in the intervening 17 years, is all too obvious.

Yet the clunky symbolism of the play seems to argue in the opposite direction. On the one hand, Gladys denounces Piet's aloes as "turgid with violence—like everything else in this country." "Is that the price of survival—thorns and bitterness?" she asks. Yet it is Piet who is surviving and persisting, after all; Gladys seems to be heading back to the institution at the end of the play, and Steve is off for England. Are we supposed to deplore or admire Piet's stolid enduring of his wife's abuse, his comrades' unjustified accusations, and even his best friend's suspicion—not to mention his continuing to live as an exile in his own home, a nation whose policies he abhors?

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Though the play is confused, the performances are not. Tucci's anguish is a bit too unmodulated, but she is not afraid to allow Gladys' hysteria and paranoia to grate convincingly on the audience. Jones sputters and roars in his typical fashion, but here his bellowing is perfectly suited to a character who allows his broad emotions to camouflage his own uncertainty—about the supposed betrayal by his comrade and his own abandonment of the cause they had both espoused. Best of all is Yulin, who has the weary but uncynical air of a born survivor. Fugard never makes it clear what Piet is living for, but Yulin never makes us doubt that he is alive.

Notes on Contributors

CHARLES TOMLINSON's recent publications include *The Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation* and *Some Americans* (University of California Press). Next fall Mr. Tomlinson will be Visiting Senior Fellow at Princeton University.

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GERALD EARLY*, native Philadelphian and avid boxing fan, is a doctoral candidate in English Literature at Cornell University. This is his first published work.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE's works-in-progress include translations of *The Acts of the Apostles* and *The Letters of Saint Paul* as well as a new collection of poetry.

The most recent novel by JOYCE CAROL OATES, *Bellefleur,* was published last year by Dutton.

New Directions has just published SAMUEL HAZO's latest collection of poems, *To Paris.*

A book of short stories by PETER MAKUCK is forthcoming from University of Illinois Press.

BARRY SPACKS is currently working on a new novel and preparing a volume of new and selected poems, to be published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 1982.

IOANNA CARLSEN* lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is at work on a book of poems.

CHARLES W. MILLARD, who writes regularly on art for *The Hudson Review*, is also Chief Curator for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. His most recent book is *The Sculpture of Edgar Dégas*, published by Princeton University Press.

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An essay on Vladimir Nabokov by DEAN FLOWER will appear in a future issue of *The Hudson Review.*

JEFFERSON HUNTER teaches English at Smith College. His book *Edwardian Fiction* is forthcoming from Harvard University Press.

G. E. MURRAY* is poetry columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times.* His most recent collection, *Repairs* (University of Missouri Press), won the Devins Award for poetry in 1979.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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Reviews

DEAN FLOWER

Fiction Chronicle

THE DOMINANT INTEREST IN AMERICAN FICTION THESE DAYS is unhappy families. Tolstoy was right: they are all different. E. L. Doctorow depicts every family as nearly depraved by money and sex, and Gilbert Sorrentino seems to conclude that "the meanest bloody thing in hell" made the family. But there are a number of good novelists around, men as well as women, who interest themselves in the broken family. Hilma Wolitzer traces the difficult bonding of a widow and step-daughter; James Carroll uncovers both cruelty and healing in family closure; Ella Leffland shows the need for familial trust through characters who only glimpse it in foreign lands. In fiction from Great Britain nowadays I gather that the emphasis is on self and class, or self and nation, more than on unhappy families. William Golding concocts an allegory that questions the privileged when they fail to be responsible aboard the good ship *Britannia*; Benedict Kiely embraces the whole "state of Ireland" in stories celebrating the deepest communal and regional ties; Angus Wilson embodies the fate of post-War England in the lives of two brothers who might restore meaning to a decayed family; Margaret Drabble puts her liberated woman back in touch with her past, her class, and the traditional "moving circle" of her family. By contrast to these, American writers have little sense of any shared identity, past or present. They're just trying to pick up the pieces.

E. L. Doctorow has developed all kinds of suave new stylistic tricks in his latest novel, but the effect is sham.[1] Very much like *Ragtime* with all those Mauve Decade costumes so obviously stitched together in the seventies, this novel stitches together a lot of old clothing from books and movies about the Depression. Doctorow's snarling protagonist, Joe Korzeniowski, is a composite from Dos Passos, Farrell, Steinbeck, and Wright, glazed over with a Mailer-style hipsterism:

> I grew up in a dervish spin of health and sickness and by the time I was fifteen everything was fine, I knew my life and I made it work, I raced down alleys and jumped fences a few seconds before the cops, I stole what I needed and went after girls like prey, I went looking for trouble and was keen for it, I was keen for life . . . I joined a gang and carried a penknife I had sharpened like an Arab, like a Dago, I stuck it in a vege-

[1] LOON LAKE, by *E. L. Doctorow*. Random House. $11.95.

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> table peddler's horse, I stuck it in a feeb with a watermelon head, I slit awnings with it . . .

Naturally this trumped-up character has a Deeper Honesty than your ordinary Joe. He doesn't join the other immoral males at the circus who rape the Fat Lady, but runs off instead with the owner's wife and money. Not that he hungers for either, penniless ambitious kid that he is; no, he defiles the woman and throws the money away, knowing all about filthy lucre from Freud and Norman O. Brown.

Now of course I have missed the real point: young Joe isn't telling the story but rather his older self, the one we hear about on the last page, who went to Williams, had a career in the CIA after the War, married women of fashion, and became the tycoon who was his nemesis in 1936. But how glib all this is, how mechanical a pastiche of Gatsby, Willy Stark, and Rojack in *An American Dream*; at least Gatsby could be imagined through his romantic narrator; at least Mailer's tycoon had some believable power. But Doctorow's figure remains stuffed, a set of fragments from other books. At the end protagonist Joe blends right into that anonymity, don't ask how. Every tycoon was once a sadistic hoodlum, I suppose.

Doctorow keeps one step ahead of such criticism, of course. The *real* real point of *Loon Lake* is that fat poet Warren Penfield invented it, refracting his own grim childhood in Joe's and shaping the master of the place (who now recedes ever farther from the page) into his own prefabricated image of the type. And behind Penfield's hopelessly bad artistry lies a modern computer, printing out non-poems and raw data, the *real* real author no doubt of the book. Note how Doctorow works the disappearing act: *he* isn't responsible. Very much like his nebulous Joe, however, Doctorow does reveal himself in this novel:

> I liked to go to the movies and sit there you could see two features and a newsreel for a dime. I liked comedies and musicals and pictures with high style. I always went alone. In my mind was the quiet fellow trying to see himself, hear what he sounded like. He fitted himself out in movie stars he discarded them. I was interested in the way I instantly knew who the situation called for and became him.

Lo and behold, our author in the audience. Doctorow ought to be arrested for displaying so much technique to no purpose.

Gilbert Sorrentino's reputation took a sudden leap with *Mulligan Stew*, and now a new journal, *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, has announced it will devote its first issue to him. With eight volumes of poetry and seven novels, Sorrentino must be one of the most prolific writers of the decade. His current novel[2] takes its fancy title from astrophysics: the difference between the real and the apparent path of starlight, "because of the component of the observer's velocity," according to the unhelpful epigraph.

[2] ABERRATION OF STARLIGHT, by *Gilbert Sorrentino.* Random House. $9.95.

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But what the novel gives is perfectly familiar: a few days during the 1939 summer vacation of four people—a boy, his divorced mother, her boyfriend, and her father—presenting in turn (you guessed it) each person's point of view. It becomes immediately clear that Sorrentino knows his Joyce better than astrophysics. Each of the novel's four parts contains a catechism section ("What misadventure befell John at Lake Hopatcong some ten years before Brigit's death?"; "How did Billy's left eye become crossed?"), each is packed with lists and saturated with clichés, and each ends with a Molly Bloom-style soliloquy. Yet the novel succeeds quite wonderfully, despite the artiness, in a documentary and psychological realism.

What seems at first a static, *Last Year at Marienbad*-like circling around, turns out to have a disciplined structure. The boy (Billy Recco), the mother (Marie Recco), the boyfriend (Tom Thebus), and the father (John McGrath) are each given ten "documents," and they come in exactly the same order: (1) a verbal snapshot of the character, third-person, in the present; (2) a recent letter each has written to a friend; (3) a conversation with another member of the group; (4) a catechism of the omniscient author, testing him on each character; (5) a fantasy letter (Billy, for example, writes to his unfaithful father, "When Tom is my real father soon I will ask him to go and punch you and Margie in your face"); (6) a fantasy of how present conflicts will all be perfectly resolved; (7) a dream-reminiscence, mixing longings and events of the more distant past; (8,9) two internal monologues describing the hours before, during, and after the disastrous night out of Marie and Tom; and (10) a final revery over the whole life. The effect at times is like snooping in the bedrooms of perfect strangers: fascinating, embarrassing, ruthless, prejudicial. Sorrentino implies a good deal of anger at these pathetic figures, especially the inhibited Marie and her hypocritical father, and he hints more than once that the whited Catholic Church in the background may be somehow to blame. Yet the objectivity of the artist wins out. The relentless clichés cancel out irony and sarcasm, after a while, leaving only the pathos of so much inarticulate need. And Sorrentino has a special gift for rendering people's fantasies: Marie's dream honeymoon aboard a yacht with Tom's "finely chiseled profile against the sunset," followed by Tom's berserk pornography of his "eighth-grade English teacher, Greta Garbo, a typist currently employed by the Uneek Metal Parts, Inc., a woman in powdered wig and domino, and Tillie the Toiler," all in "various stages of undress" and with eyes "bright with sexual frenzy." The book ends with self-pitying old John reaching out to his daughter and grandson, wishing they could be "a real family." They are.

Hilma Wolitzer is worth everyone's attention. Her latest novel manages to be homely and funny in a style of scrupulous understatement.[3] The story comes through twenty-six-year-old Linda, widowed after only six weeks of marriage. Experienced in teaching at the Fred Astaire Dance

[3] HEARTS, by *Hilma Wolitzer*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $10.95.

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Studio of Bayonne, N.J., but in nothing else, Linda spends the novel trying to figure out what to do with herself and, perhaps the bigger problem, what to do with her thirteen-year-old step-daughter, Robin. Here is how things happen in Wolitzer's abrupt world:

> "Well, he's stabilized now," the doctor said, bouncing a little on his heels. The stethoscope hanging from his pocket danced like a rubber snake. "And I'm really happy with our findings so far. It looks good—all systems go!" He gave the thumbs-up sign and went whistling down the corridor. Wright [Linda's husband], who had been nodding and even smiling during the doctor's pronouncement, nodded again, at Linda, released his weak grip on her hand, and shut his eyes forever.

Linda decides to head west by car, hoping to drop Robin with her father's family in Iowa or to track down her remarried mother in New Mexico. Life in the car, however, proves tough going for Linda, who cannot help herself from prattling to fill Robin's glum and critical silences. Wolitzer is adept at contrasting Linda's consciousness and her words. After lecturing Robin on the delights of California (drive-in churches and Disneyland), Linda asks herself why talk so much? She decides, "it was to avoid speaking the unspeakable. It was because she could not say aloud that she was *bound* to Robin, that you can become a family by the grace of accident and will, that we have a duty to console one another as best we can." But this is a rare moment; Linda remains touchingly imperfect. One day they are stuck in a room without TV ("My best shows are on," whines Robin). Linda offers to read a book she finds there, but it's written in a language foreign to her: "*Man kann nicht . . . wissen wie es . . . ausfallen wird*," she mouths; "I wonder what it says." Wolitzer's theme, however, does not require such knowledge, only the half-articulate words to convey feelings. Although neither one of them can say it, they are, against all odds, a family at the end. My only disappointment is that Wolitzer tends to blur and simplify the details of roadside America in which she sets her novel: restaurants, motels, hitchhikers, endless landscape and highways. More of these should be as sharply perceived as Linda's memory of the Fred Astaire Dance Studio in Bayonne.

James Carroll's fine new novel, an equally heartening but more violent family affair, will undoubtedly be made into a movie.[4] It will fail as a movie, despite a fine performance by Dustin Hoffman as the draft resister who returns after ten years in Sweden to take up his American life again. Not only the novel's plottiness but its sharply visualized scenes and theatrical climaxes and its broken-family theme will convince some scenario writer to take it up. But it's irreducibly a novel. It resembles in a very general way another novel deceptively dominated by action, Robert Stone's *Dog Soldiers*.

Yet the cinematic feeling is strong. David Dolan, civil rights activist of

[4] FAULT LINES, by *James Carroll*. Little, Brown. $11.95.

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the late sixties and wanted by the FBI, opens the action by moving anxiously through customs in New York, taking a room in the seedy Chelsea Hotel, trying to find out how he stands with the law. Dolan's fate is tied up with his brother Brendan, killed in Viet Nam, and with his brother's wife ("Eddie," for some reason) and son (Bren). Eddie has written a novel and gone to Hollywood, where she marries a rather famous and flamboyant actor, Cheney McCoy. Now separated from him and trying to write a new novel, she seeks custody of the boy, but Cheney has strong legal and emotional claims. Each chapter cuts to a different character in a different place: Bren with his grandmother on Hunter's Island off the coast of Maine; Cheney in New York to play Richard III, trying to focus his marital rages into the role; Eddie jogging in Central Park and fending off a mugger; Dolan in a Cambridge laundromat with his mother while the FBI watch his house. The past emerges in further vignetted glimpses: Dolan's escape to Canada disguised as his brother; Eddie's marriage to Brendan whom she didn't love; Bren's shocked vision of Cheney hitting his mother. Complicated in summary, none of this seems more complex in the reading than it would be in life. Carroll keeps it all credible with shifting points of view.

When Eddie discovers she is being pursued on the jogging path around Central Park reservoir, for example, Carroll tells us no more than what runs through her mind: terror, relief, exhaustion, terror again, then anger, and elation. She breaks off a car antenna and terrifies her attacker, suddenly supremely tough and foul-mouthed. "Where had she learned that? *Kojack*? All those evenings alone at home, babysitting Bren while watching cops push punks up against walls. Angie Dickinson, Jesus Christ, *Policewoman*. . . . [But] where had that come from, not the trick but the will? The vitality?" Less than an hour later, however, her well-being collapses; Cheney has called the house in Maine, and she's afraid again, for herself and Bren, and bitterly angry on top of that for her own weakness. Similarly Carroll gets us wholly inside Cheney's mind, precluding any judgments about his sadism, macho role-playing, or near-insanity. Seen this way, Cheney has no identity but the one he feels out in the process of acting; even his best role, playing father to Bren, comes as much from the professional actor as from the heart. Ironically that's the role Eddie fears most, but it saves Cheney in the end from villainy and it saves Bren from certain death. Much as we are tempted to cast Cheney as a perfect Richard III, we cannot. Nor can Eddie and Dolan separate themselves from Cheney; he forces them to "act," as he does, learning roles not of their own making.

The novel's end suffers from too much action. With every major character on stage, Carroll cannot linger in anyone's consciousness long enough to build, in his usual scrupulous way, the emotional authenticity he had before. But his theme is clear: Dolan tries to stand outside the grim spectacle of family life—Eddie and Cheney in disastrous combat over Bren—and then admit its hold over him: "what a wasteland they'd made of their family life. Family life, he repeated, perhaps aloud, and

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shuddered. Yes, he felt a new strong kinship toward his nephew. . . . But family life? No, he didn't want it." As the novel proves, however, Dolan does not have the choice. Fault lines show where people connect as well as where they're likely to break.

Ella Leffland's first collection of stories should earn for her the recognition that her three novels have only foreshadowed.[5] Her typical character is a young adult, living alone or in some narrow isolation of the mind, driven by some egotistical theory that ends by punishing him, or her, in a rich flow of poetic justice. The newly-married couple in "Glad Offerings," for example, Rudy and Peg, plan to spend their honeymoon on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. Just graduated from college with honors in Spanish studies, Rudy's head is filled with images of ideal Spaniards, and he wishes to become one with them. In fluent Spanish he "politely" asks a mustachioed gentleman of Madrid where the Spaniards themselves take vacations, and is annoyed by the man's voluble response: "Rudy cherished a Spanish image of noble brevity," Leffland tells us. "The man should merely have looked at him, seen the light in his eyes, and said, 'Uribia.' " Rudy's wisdom quickly loses them all their money, and they end up dependent on the generosity of a voluble landlady who has decorated her rooms with Mickey Mouse decals. The crux of the story is Rudy's rudeness. Chagrined at his own ineptitude, he refuses to recognize the humanity and suffering of others. His wife, the tacky place, the tiresome landlady and her decrepit cat equally revolt him, but he's too insecure to swallow any pride. When the landlady who has fed and sheltered them—and will soon do their laundry as well—stands by their table waiting for an invitation, "Rudy felt bound by the Spanish tradition of courtesy to ask her to sit down with them." It never dawns on him that such courtesy might be more than a fine stylish mannerism. His richly deserved frustration is to be always in the wrong, unable to prove the moral superiority he imagines for himself. I detect a whiff of Flannery O'Connor in many of these Leffland people.

Another passionate pilgrim to Europe is the seventeen-year-old James A. Skrimm ("Monsieur Scream") who dreams of becoming a painter like his father. Setting up in a miserly-run youth hostel in rural France, Skrimm quickly makes a fool of himself with Van Gogh-like posturings while the landlady swindles and entraps him, her children spy, and the postmaster who took his epistolary cries for help turns out to be her husband. Leffland's irony is delightfully unsparing: attacked by sleeplessness, paranoia, nervous diarrhea, even the family dog, Skrimm's theory of the artist suffering in noble isolation takes a severe beating. "Last Courtesies," however, offers a grimmer punishment for similar misconceptions. Lillian lives alone in San Francisco, serving the causes of art and culture by working at the switchboard of the Opera House ("Italian and German required"). She never understood how her late Aunt Bedelia could have

[5] LAST COURTESIES AND OTHER STORIES, by *Ella Leffland.* Harper & Row. $12.95.

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been so courteous to Vladimir, the half-crazy Russian piano tuner who descended on them one day. Now she fears Vladimir is demented when he tries to instruct her about the city's reality, its moral chaos and filth. Slamming the door on him, she opens it—politely—to the real killer. It was Vladimir who offered the last courtesy.

Without waste motion or sentiment, these stories have a superb sense of justice. Each character determines, with more or less self-awareness, his particular entrapment. Yet the irony isn't everything; Leffland makes us care even about characters we condemn. At the end of "Glad Offerings" we see ungrateful Rudy, wearing "the crisp white shirt that Señora Ciervas had washed and ironed the day before stretched across his knobby spine." It's a fine dispassionate touch, that knobby spine.

Decades ago William Golding told an interviewer that the two great influences on his work were the plays of Euripides and *The Battle of Maldon. It was not a leg-pull, though the irony seems characteristic.* Euripides stood for the dark tangle of man's mind and heart, I suppose, and the Anglo-Saxon poet for language viscerally close to experience. Golding's latest novel displays both "influences."[6] The Euripides theme works as follows: in about 1815 an uppish young Englishman, Edmund Talbot, sets out for a career in the Antipodes aboard a leaky old vessel probably named *The Britannia*. Seeing all through the glass of his egotism, darkly, Talbot struggles to discount the realities around him: stench, seasickness, the captain's authority, the characters of his fellow passengers. Aboard a ship of fools, he imagines himself not one of them. The apparent fool, everybody's scapegoat in fact, is the young Reverend Robert Colley. Despised by Talbot, humiliated by Captain Anderson, trustful of the crew he would preach to, unacquainted with the powers of strong drink, ignorant of the homoerotic impulses within himself, Colley sees through another kind of glass, darkly. Brutally awakened to a lurid vision of himself and the world as grotesque, beyond salvation, monstrous, Colley is driven to death.

But Talbot learns gradually how he has misconstrued almost everything; he merely has some of the stuffing knocked out of him. At the end he offers a vaguely Christian commentary on Colley's literal and figurative fall: "What a thing he stumbled over in himself! [writes Talbot] . . . Just as his iron-shod heels shot him rattling down the steps of the ladders from the quarterdeck and afterdeck to the waist; even so a gill or two of the *fiery ichor* brought him from the heights of complacent austerity to what his sobering mind must have felt as the lowest hell of self-degradation." Planning to write nothing of this truth to Colley's sister (The horror! The horror!), Talbot ends with another obeisance to the lord of the flies: "With lack of sleep and too much understanding I grow a little crazy, I think, like all men at sea who live too close to each other and too close thereby to all that is monstrous under the sun and moon."

Yet the novel does not produce its intended vision of monstrosity. Nor does Talbot emerge from his moral darkness fully into the light. He be-

[6] RITES OF PASSAGE, by *William Golding*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $10.95.

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gins well, though. Using the epistolary style that tempted John Barth and more recently Erica Jong into the thinnest parody, Golding nicely resists verbal extravaganza. He allows his narrator some showy moments, then brings him up short. Here is Talbot in the throes of amorous battle, mindful of Lord Nelson's example as he describes it for his patron:

> My sword was in my hand and I boarded her! She retired in disorder to the end of the hutch where the canvas basin awaited her in its iron hoop. I attacked once more and the hoop collapsed. The bookshelf tilted. *Moll Flanders* lay open on the deck, *Gil Blas* fell on her and my aunt's parting gift to me, Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs (MDCCLX) II vols London* covered them both. I struck them all aside and Zenobia's tops'ls too. I called on her to yield . . .

Talbot's performance here, as he soon learns, fails both as conquest and as rhetoric. Someone on deck fires a blunderbuss, and from this pivotal moment Talbot's moral education begins in earnest. The chapter ends with a chastened Talbot writing,

> To tell the truth, though irritation was still uppermost in my mind as I sat down and began to make this entry—and as the entry has progressed—irritation has been subsumed into a kind of universal sadness—Good God! Is Aristotle right in this commerce of the sexes as he is in the orders of society? I must rouse myself from too dull a view of the farmyard transaction by which our wretched species is lugged into the daylight.

But that "too dull a view" never really brightens with understanding. Golding refuses to transform this educable, not quite impervious snob—an impersonation he manages perfectly—into a sadder and wiser human being. The transformation seems to occur, then anti-climactically does not. Talbot learns less than we thought. As Colley's body sinks into the sea, Talbot notes coldly, "Of course the cannon balls assisted. This subsidiary use of their mass was after all in keeping with their general nature." His curiosity over Colley's death chiefly focuses on the ambiguity of the phrase "to get a chew off a parson." Even more eagerly than before he studies his Maritime Dictionary to learn "tarpaulin language." Privilege may entail responsibility, as the mate Summers forced him to see, but Talbot shows more interest in the definitive way language puts a lid on things. So too, I think, does Golding. Colley officially dies of "a low fever." The body "entered the water with a single loud phut!" Through Talbot's imperfect understanding—his grudging admissions, his partial growth—Golding would like to have the story of Robert Colley glow "with a significance that was by turns farcical, gross and tragic." But the effect tends to be manipulative and impersonal, morally cold; the narrator's mask is opaque.

None of Benedict Kiely's eight novels is well known in this country, al-

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though his stories have appeared frequently in *The New Yorker*, so Thomas Flanagan's recent selection of seventeen Kiely stories and a novella ranges from 1963 to the present.[7] In that time Kiely's miraculous voice does not seem to have changed at all, nor does the world he describes. Here's a first paragraph:

> Breakfast was perfunctory and the main meal of the day was taken at a place called the Continental Café or the Café Continental where we used to eat bangers and mash by the hundredweight and dance with the waitresses to a voice and a tune on the radio: There's a lovely lake in London where Rhododendrons grow.

What other writer depends on so little punctuation, letting rhythms of phrase convey everything? And how quickly these stories begin, with the instant warmth of the narrator's voice: "Cousin Ellen wrote poetry for the local papers and was the greatest nonstop talker you, or anybody else, ever listened to." In Kiely's Ireland, the world of Omagh and County Tyrone, we learn to expect tact and tolerance for all. Take for example Cowboy Carson, "the only man in our town who lived completely in the imagination," but that makes him neither outcast nor pariah.

> —Tell us about Deadwood, Cowboy, said the man behind the bar.
> —I was riding shotgun at that time, said the Cowboy. Stiff knee, you see. Couldn't mount a bronc.
> For corroborative purposes he displayed his stiff knee.

But nobody is cruel to this dreamer; they all know "the worst thing you could have done was to tell him he was never there." My favorite story (how quickly one starts wanting to choose!) is "A Ball of Malt and Madame Butterfly," about a handsome prostitute: "What she is her mother was before her, and proud of it." An idealistic bachelor named Pike Hunter, who reads poetry and normally fears women, falls in love with Butterfly's "pilgrim soul," as he conceives it. Most of the story gets told in the pub where they first drink champagne together and later where Butterfly comes to complain about all the poetry he reads her, how he grows possessive and worries about her health. In the most offhand way Kiely has charmed us into discovering in this funny pair sacred and profane love, Maud Gonne and Crazy Jane, even Stephen Dedalus and the seashore girl, all balanced in serio-comic irreconcilability.

Even in the stories that deal with the North of Ireland today Kiely cannot really sustain his moments of bitterness and contempt, deep though they are. In the novella "Proxopera," for example, three I.R.A. men take over the house of old Mr. Binchey and force him to deliver a bomb to the nearby town next morning. A retired teacher of Latin and history and English literature, Binchey feels more defiance than terror at his predica-

[7] THE STATE OF IRELAND, by *Benedict Kiely*. David R. Godine. $14.95.

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ment, more brooding than anguish. As he drives slowly into town with a milk-can bomb, Binchey finds he can have no proxy role in this supposed reprisal against "the Brits." The whole countryside is peopled by his family; the place resonates with their shared history; the town is his to protect, not some strange soldier's. Kiely makes an eloquent long revery out of Binchey's ordeal, counterpointing it with bits of remembered songs and poems, dreams good and bad, memories of his dead wife. There is never any real doubt that he'll not deliver the bomb. Kiely's elegiac notes in this story fail to convince; he remains a devout celebrant at life's feast. When Binchey gropes under the back seat of the car for a helpful bottle of Hennessy, or when he recognizes one of the masked I.R.A. men by his shoes, we sense that comedy will win.

Such a veteran novelist as Angus Wilson has never come close to setting the world on fire, but his latest novel is a far better book than most of the novels around this season.[8] Nothing like it seems possible in America, in fact, because Wilson so saturates his story in a particular history (seventeenth-century and post-World War II England) and in a particular place: the fictive Tothill Hall, designed in the classical manner by Sir Roger Pratt but completed with a baroque flourish by John Vanbrugh. The house reflects the personalities not just of its architects but of the two young boys who come to live in it in 1948, Piers Mosson with his fierce imaginative passion and Tom Mosson, his younger brother who loves rule, order, and balance. Wilson's dazzling first scene reveals Piers in an ecstatic revelry, almost literally soaring into the baroque fantasy of Vanbrugh's blue vaulted ceiling, at one with Phaethon and his steeds depicted there. But the same place terrifies Tom, beyond all reason, and he wails uncontrollably. Here is how Piers experiences the Great Hall:

> So happy was the young man that he left his golden cart and his horses to fly on their own, and, turning and wheeling, now feet first, now head first, he floated through the sky, dazzling all with his sudden dives and plunges and somersaults, dropping all his clothes from him, so that only a long white cloth twisted and trailed across his naked body as he flew up and down through the blue.

Tom meanwhile is left "frozen into himself like all these painted people on the ceiling, all these marble people by the walls." This is only the beginning of an intricate play of antinomies: baroque energy vs. classical repose, inspiration vs. discipline, actors vs. statues, fire vs. ice, art vs. life, theater vs. law.

Wilson's immediate theme is a decaying aristocracy, and he uses all the familiar devices of nineteenth-century fiction to get his story told. Great-grandfather Mosson totters out of bed to appall the family with his war memories. Lady Mosson proves an arch snob and her son Hubert—after a promising engagement to an Italian millionairess—proves a mollycoddle. Rosemary Mosson, widowed mother of the two boys, precipitates chaos in

[8] SETTING THE WORLD ON FIRE, by *Angus Wilson.* Viking. $12.95.

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this carefully regulated family by announcing her long-standing affair with a married man. Her cynical brother Eustace drifts in and out, sponging off whomever he can. Ralph Tucker, the new steward of the house, harbors a grievance against society. And there are other subplots. Wilson plays off these near-satiric materials against the two Mosson boys, who are just beginning to fathom the adult world. Piers has a director's genius, and the central action of the novel concerns his staging of an opera, Lully's *Phaethon*, in Vanbrugh's Great Hall, scene of his youthful impassioned discovery. The struggle to get the opera organized and performed in this place comes to mean everything for the Mosson brothers; it represents an ideal recovery of the past, whose meaning revitalizes the present. That undoubtedly sounds a bit theoretical, but Wilson brings off the argument with wonderful understatement, engaging the reader in the meanings of the Phaethon story and its relation to this place and family. He never needs the performance itself, having enacted it in the present before we are quite aware he has done so. This is undoubtedly a complex and magical performance, marred only by moments of perfunctory style and characterization. If Wilson ultimately lacks Piers Mosson's fire, it still burns somewhere in his head.

Like the Nabokov character who praises a novel by saying he likes its manners, I find myself in disagreement with most critics of Margaret Drabble's eighth novel: it has wonderful manners.[9] It begins in a restaurant with Kate Armstrong, Drabble's central intelligence, cutting up a steak for her one-armed friend Hugo and muttering suspiciously about the spinach. Kate has entered a mid-life interlude, not a crisis but a time for looking back and taking stock. She has been an ambitious, successful journalist who has risen from working-class origins to prominence as a feminist spokeswoman. Now she wonders about herself: with her marriage ended in divorce, her children nearly grown, an affair recently ended, her feminist enthusiasm depleted, her figure losing shape. Where will she go from here, and what is her real identity? What may dissatisfy some readers, that there are more questions in this novel than answers, expresses well its essential honesty. Kate, we gradually learn, has far more generous vulnerability than most people, but she tends to dismiss it as uncertainty. Yet it is both her virtue and her author's.

Drabble traces not just the fact that but the process by which Kate refuses abstractions. Here she is remembering the mealtime ritual of home:

> On the dot of twelve thirty the chops descended on the willow-pattern plates, accompanied by the invariable two veg. Kate, eating, trying not to watch her father eating, was struck by so acute a sense of inner panic that she was afraid she might cry aloud or start to tear her hair. The routine, the repetition, the sameness. . . . The water jugs, the canteen glasses, the wooden napkin rings, the white bowl containing stewed fruit. How could so short a meal take so long? . . . *Why* did she sit there

[9] THE MIDDLE GROUND, by *Margaret Drabble.* Knopf. $10.95.

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> so meekly, so subdued, so silent, with a scream of protest wailing high and inaudible like a bat in her head?

Overwhelmed by the power of these memories, Kate refuses to explain herself with a label like "ashamed" or "afraid," because "No words seemed in any way to approach the reality of the experience, its implacable obviousness." For such a consciousness as this, journalism hardly suffices. Yet Kate harbors no poetic suspicion of facts. Ted, her recent lover, has in fact helped her to recognize the reality of statistical facts. The best way Kate experiences the "implacable obviousness" of her identity, however, comes not through fact but memory. Walking along the "sewage bank" where she used to play as a child (her father was a sanitary engineer), she feels afresh the mystery of her self, the unchangeable stamp of her origin. Despite her achievements, she has not moved so far in London as she thought; indeed she has in a sense made her present life in the image of her past, almost as if it had been deliberate. Hobbling along the bank in her modish boots, Kate smells the untreated sewage ("How typical of her to have chosen a sewage bank for such stirrings, instead of a nice little cake and a nice cup of tea"). Kate must drop into the dark tunnels of her past here, with all her comforting conceptions taken away; she must recognize her parents again as she once did, "two terrible people" who are still in "the tangled roots in her heart." It's impossible to do justice to the seamless progression of this powerful scene, so a moment from it will have to do:

> As she stood, trying to think and not to think, a strange distracting smell began to make its way towards her. She sniffed. Sewage, of course. From the manhole just before her. She walked towards it and peered down. . . . The smell, powerful and secret, of drains and rainwater rose towards her. A vegetable, organic smell. Well, she had to admit it, a pleasant smell. She actually liked it. As a child she had liked it very much, had much preferred it to the treated smell of antiseptics and disinfectants that hangs around most potentially unsavory places. In fact—and a faint prickle of embarrassment raised the hair on the back of her neck—in fact, one of the secret pleasures of her childhood had been sniffing this very smell. What a shocking recollection.

The authenticity of this moment is unmistakable, right down to the prickle of embarrassment.

At the end of the novel Kate still does not know what dress, or what identity, will become her. But she's ready to accept the rich miscellany of her family and friends, their dependencies and disappearances, their unsuspected gifts, her own centrality and vulnerability. The Iris Murdoch of *Under the Net* hovers here at the close, as Kate decides "Anything is possible, it is all undecided. Everything or nothing. It is all in the future," and that fills her with "excitement, joy, anticipation, apprehension." The most open-ended of Drabble novels, *The Middle Ground* is full of rich tastes and smells.

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Criticism as Literature

THIS HAS BEEN A PRETTY GOOD FALL for old-fashioned criticism of the kind written by someone who knows what he or she believes in (more or less), seems to have read about everything—at least more than yours truly the reader—is ready nay eager to make judgments and has a strong enough taste to make them stick, does not use terms like "valorize" or "recuperate" or even "hermeneutic circle," and is interested in constructing rather than deconstructing. Of course it's also true that two of the critics written about here are dead and one of them distinctly of an older literary atmosphere.[1] The fourth, Clive James, is an Australian living in England who when he visited America last year (looking for a publisher, he said) was to be seen in two hugely entertaining evenings with Dick Cavett, rather than at (say) the Wesleyan Center for Advanced Studies where he did not deliver a paper on post-structuralist thought. At any rate each of the four writes as if there were such a thing as an intelligent, unpedantic common reader who wants to hear what an unspecialist expert has to say about the experience of reading books. For all we know, maybe there is such a creature, waiting out there somewhere.

At one point Clive James refers to Shaw's writings about dramatic and musical events (*Our Theatre in the Nineties* and *Music in London*) as "the finest critical achievement in the language." If you can understand how somebody could make that judgment, you will find James's first American collection of his essay-reviews satisfying indeed. Selected from three volumes which appeared in England during the 1970s (*The Metropolitan Critic, Visions Before Midnight,* and *At the Pillars of Hercules*) they are written throughout in the bright, perspicuous style Kingsley Amis calls characteristic of certain kinds of light verse. Mr. James, who is himself an accomplished light verser of the contemporary London literary and cultural scene, might be termed a light verse critic, if "light" may suggest agility and deftness rather than shallowness. In fact James is extremely wide-ranging, knows his Dante as well as his "Mission Impossible" (a reviewer once dubbed him "Big Aussie with a copy of Dante's *Paradiso* in the original lingo") and is as good a critic of poetry as any currently visible. Like Shaw, he is fearless, sarcastic, self-involved and self-dramatizing but largely in a comic way; though he doesn't suffer fools gladly he saves his best efforts for encomium and eulogy.

[1] FIRST REACTIONS: Critical Essays 1968–1979, by *Clive James.* Knopf. $12.95. THE THIRTIES, by *Edmund Wilson.* Edited with an Introduction by *Leon Edel.* Farrar Straus & Giroux. $17.50. IDEAS AND THE NOVEL, by *Mary McCarthy.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $7.95. SPEAKING OF LITERATURE AND SOCIETY, by *Lionel Trilling.* Edited by *Diana Trilling.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $17.95.

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It is however a bit much to have him, in the preface to this collection, look back on and shake a finger at Early Clive James. He says, for example, that his essay on E. E. Cummings was "written throughout with a would-be bravura which would nowadays, if I found myself ever thinking like that, cause me to go somewhere dark and sleep off the fever." But of course this would-be modest recantation of manner is itself highly mannered and bravura enough for anybody, while the Cummings essay ("An Instrument to Measure Spring With") is in fact a first-rate piece of criticism, the best thing I've seen on him in some time. Here is James on how Cummings wrote little "confessional" poetry because he probably had little to confess:

> He had seen in advance the temptations his ear would offer the artist and had armoured himself against them. One tends to ascribe this invulnerability to an innate primitivism—the lucky fool—but it is probably more correct to say that it was the result of a conscious act of dedication and courage, of highly developed mentality. . . . These elementary themes of Cummings might have begun as a pose, but with sane men the attitudes begun as a pose are confirmed by practice into a constitution of the mentality. Not necessarily a meretricious process: the brave men whose braveness counts usually have to talk themselves into being brave. From eccentricity to individuality, from self-assertion to a massive vocational presence, Cummings simplified and hardened his attitude to life until it supported him all by itself: he could stand up in it like a steel suit.

This is perfect, right down to the rhythm of its prose and the steel suit. And James is equally good at technical criticism, as seen in other pieces on American poets like Berryman, Roethke, Bishop and Wilbur. In case anyone should confuse him with a tough guy insensitive to the finer tones, he makes it clear, writing about Wilbur, how much we should be grateful—and alas have not always been so—for his "poised, civilized and very beautiful poems," and he concludes the appreciation with a nice smack at a just-published book by one fierce Englishman:

> They'll [Wilbur's poems] be worth remembering when some of the rough, tough, gloves-off stuff we're lately supposed to admire starts looking thin. The beautiful changes—nobody denies that—but it doesn't change that much. I don't think it changes into *Crow*.

James is himself a song-writer, refers to Tin Pan Alley as if he knows what he's talking about, and likes to emphasize the "sonic" aspects of poetry—which emphasis is all to the good. So he points out, in the fine essays about Auden from later in the volume, that Auden's great gift was the unsettling one "of making anything said sound truer than true." Or, in the essay on Larkin ("Don Juan in Hull," a review of *High Windows*) he shakes his head over those who can't hear the central loneliness of this

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writer: "To the reader who has Larkin's poetry by heart, no poet seems more open. . . . Apart from an outright yell for help, he has sent out every distress signal a shy man can."

I suppose one might object to the writing as overheated here and there, since I'd just as soon not be told, even if true, that Richard Wilbur "looks like a jet-jockey"; while to say about some lines from Roethke, in which Eliot's presence is too evidently felt, "There it stands, like a stolen car hastily resprayed and dangerously retaining its original number plates," reveals the critic too pleased with his ingenious last words. But if ingenuity is sometimes a fault in the literary criticism, it is never so in the television pieces, from which selections are included here (James reviews for *The Observer*). He describes an unforgettable moment from the BBC's "War and Peace" during which Pierre can only goggle, bemused: " 'Papa's arranged a little dinner for my name day,' breathes Helene, her piercing boobs heaving in a frock closely resembling a two-car garage." Or there is the character of Natasha, for which role the actress has been told "to jump up and down rapidly on the spot, lithp with her sinuses, skip on to the set like Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm and declare with a jaw well-nigh dislocated by youthful vitality that she is Natasha Rostov." There is Liza Minnelli, "who can't even walk up a flight of stairs sincerely (a flight of stairs was wheeled on for the specific purpose of allowing her to prove this)"; or Margaret Thatcher,"(She was saying that she wouldn't *dream* of seeking the leadership.) She sounded like a cat sliding down a blackboard." There is the assertion that Ingmar Bergman has a sense of humor "considerably inferior to that of F. R. Leavis." There is finally (enough, enough) this word on the Olympics: "With the possible exception of the Queen, everybody at the Olympic Games pulled a hamstring or Achilles tendon." With TV as with literature, James's "first reactions" are his last reactions. It's all done on taste but there are worse things to rely on, especially if your taste is good, so James should be read.

Clive James's appreciation of Edmund Wilson ("The Metropolitan Critic") praised his "mental style" for its immunity to metaphysics. But as one already knew, and as is confirmed by Leon Edel's edition of Wilson's journals from the 1930s, metaphysics wasn't the only human pursuit or aspiration Wilson was immune to. Or rather, it seems that so often he is doing or undergoing something only in order to write about it later. A curious book to sit down and read through, *The Thirties* is somewhat less "bitty" and discontinuous than its predecessor *The Twenties* (a real patience-tryer, that one); still there is a lot of triviality, of interest only to those committed to Wilson as a genius whose every recorded phrase we must cherish. If Ingmar Bergman and F. R. Leavis are long shots in the sense-of-humor sweepstakes, Wilson is hardly a front-runner. His "clinical" method of recording sensations, fragments of conversation, and all the gory details of his sexual experiences (he is fascinated by menstruation) soon wears out its welcome; parts of this book seem there mainly to be worked into *Memoirs of Hecate County* where they sound, to me, equally unsatisfactory. It depends I guess on how you feel about a

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sentence which begins "She sat up and dangled the nipple of first one breast then the other for me to suck," then continues, "which I did in a moribund manner (they seemed to hang more now that she was thinner)." It could be hilarious played for laughs, but Wilson isn't playing it that way, and the overall effect of the sex writing is weirdly embarrassing and decidedly un-erotic. Maybe that was the point.

Even in the section titled "The Death of Margaret," in which Wilson recorded his responses to his second wife's death (she fell down a flight of stairs) and which has been found a moving document by some, I again felt uneasy about being confronted with matters which might have been left private. (Edel says Wilson intended it for publication.) Instead the best part of the book for me were those about landscape and cityscape, especially about Cape Cod to which he drives from New York in 1936 with towns and roads minutely observed along the way: "the road to the Cape . . . that leads through Fall River and New Bedford, with their gray wooden houses, their grim textile mills, their pale slaty expanses of water, with a dingy undistinguished shipping, along which rather gloomy-seeming men are digging clams in the dark slimy mud: the streets lead downhill to the water, but even the water now seems stripped of the freedom and romance of the past." For those of us thirty-four years later who never drive through Fall River or New Bedford on the way to anywhere, Wilson's description puts the romance back in them. There are bits of "nature writing," satisfyingly there for their own sake, as in this item labeled "New England": "the clouds moving fast in the sky, the trees all alive—and a clear flowing light that breaks up the steady summer sun—bush with aspenlike leaves turned over by the wind and sparkling silver white—almost like sunlight on water, the Provincetown harbor—against the background of white and blue fall sky, now getting windy and wild—." And, in a manner which anticipates the great later Wilson memoir *Upstate,* the writer, living outside Stamford in 1936, working at night until 4:00 A.M., "putting myself to sleep with slugs of gin," reads *War and Peace* in his newly-learned Russian and writes about its author:

> He is one of the greatest impersonators in literature—in the same way that Dickens and Proust are. The narrative is all in a vein of his own—very aloof and ironic. . . . But the voice of Tolstoy himself is in itself a kind of impersonation—of an aristocrat, away above everybody, writing with a certain indifference, as if talking in complete self-possession with a negligence of the niceties of style. But the characters have a life of their own. I seemed, in that winter silence, alone in the solitary room, actually to hear their voices—Prince André, Natasha, the old Kuragin, the old Bolkonsky.

The sense of discovery, of an idea taking form as the paragraph develops under our eyes, is wonderful and worth waiting for (it occurs on p. 651) as the noble Wilson for which we can forgive pages of less enthralling stuff.

Mary McCarthy—who appears rather modestly as wife and mother

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near the end of these journals—has (forty-two years later!) produced a miniature four-chaptered book consisting of her recent Northcliffe Lectures at University College, London. The jacket praises her "lightly dropped sentences"; and ads for the book have pushed it as an iconoclastic smack at the contemporary novel for its fear and paucity of ideas, also at the academy for conniving to disallow any novel which is not Jamesian, which is not idea-proof. As everyone knows, Miss McCarthy writes with absolute ease, speaks always with nothing less than complete confidence. Never was there an intelligence less interested in cultivating Keatsian negative capability, where one is "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts." Which means that you have to watch her. She begins boldly by quoting Eliot's pronouncement on Henry James—"He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it." She says the remark is true about James, but she quarrels with the "lofty assumptions" behind it: that the art of the novel is superior to "intellect"; that it must be immune to "paraphrase" or "reduction" and must therefore avoid "ideas." She thinks these assumptions are now dogma, and that it is a pity; somehow ideas have to be reintroduced into the contemporary novel if it is to flourish. By way of reminding us just what an important part ideas *have* played in this form, she takes us on a tour of some nineteenth-century novels, most of them Continental: Balzac, Stendhal, Victor Hugo, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and others.

As with anything Mary McCarthy writes there are fine perceptions scattered through these pages: a comparison of *The Magic Mountain* and *Cancer Ward*; an extremely interesting and sympathetic consideration of *Les Misérables*; an equally good one of the "idea" of Napoleon as it touched some novelists; a fine few pages on *The Possessed.* The novelists she most admires all felt the "fascination of ideas" even when (or even more) as with Dostoevsky they were appalled by their human consequences. It is only our present age which, cowed into submission by James and Eliot, has chosen to make this fascination anathema. But the more one thinks about it, the less convincing her argument sounds. For one thing she's embarrassed by the English novel, since it doesn't illustrate much ideaplay. There is *Dombey and Son,* which she allows half a paragraph, calling it a "parable of Empire"; there is George Eliot, who has lots of ideas but thinks they should be "wholesome moral reflections" and even in *Middlemarch* fails to be a "very great writer" (only a great one?) because of her intellectual deficiency—she wants us to admire and imitate her "good characters," and that's too simple. With the exception of *Moby Dick,* American nineteenth-century fiction does not fare much better.

What I think has happened here is that, committed to giving four tidy lectures on a theme, she sat down and had an idea about Ideas; by the end of the lectures the idea had her. If, by way of making a polemical point against some great lack felt in the contemporary novel, you have to avert your eyes from most of nineteenth-century English and American fiction, then you might wonder (unless you were a True Continental Be-

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liever) about the strength of your point. But even more glaringly, is it true that—with a few exceptions like Solzhenitsyn or Iris Murdoch—the contemporary novel has interdicted ideas? Is the present-day novelist "deprived of the right of auctorial intervention" as at one point McCarthy says he is? "Deprived" as Mailer or John Barth or Pynchon have been deprived? Some deprivation! Or to go back a ways, are *Nostromo* or *Under Western Eyes,* post-Jamesian work, innocent of ideas? H. G. Wells? Has Mary McCarthy ever encountered the novels of Wyndham Lewis (no mention of him here naturally)? Aldous Huxley (also no mention)? Moving closer to the present, she remembers (on the last page) that there are writers named Bellow or Malamud or Roth, who aren't exactly void of ideas, and her way out of this embarrassment to her argument is to note that "a special license has always been granted to the Jewish novel, which is free to juggle ideas in full view of the public." Isn't it time to cease talking about "the Jewish novel" as if that takes care of Bellow or Roth? She mentions *The Coup* as a presumably exceptional example of a book which deals with ideas; but why not consider Updike's work from the start? If it's not filled with "ideas" about sex, religion and art, what do you call them? How about John Fowles's *Daniel Martin* or John Gardner's *The Sunlight Dialogues*? Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing? *Ideas and the Novel* can be taken with pleasure only after admitting that its organizing idea is full of holes.

With the recent publication of his remaining uncollected reviews and occasional pieces, Lionel Trilling's work is now available in its entirety—and though I've heard a wry word or two about the canonization of him this effort by Harcourt Brace implies, I can't see it as anything but a wholly benign operation.[2] The appearance in 1979 of *The Last Decade,* a collection of his essays and reviews from the last ten years of his life, was disappointing. Containing his late Jefferson lecture "Mind in the Modern World," a truly off-putting and, even for Trilling, impossible enterprise, the volume seemed generally longwinded and dispensably abstract, even with its traditionally good reviews of Joyce and Freud/Jung in their letters. (There is a particularly tortured performance, incomplete at his death, titled "Why We Read Jane Austen" which begins promisingly with an account of teaching her at Columbia in the early 1970s, but then runs aground on what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz has to tell us about Javanese civilization.) At any rate the 400 odd pages of *Speaking of Literature and Society* are something anyone who cares anything about Trilling's writing will want to consult. Some of the material is familiar and admittedly less than exciting the second time round—I speak particularly here of the reviews he wrote for *The Reader's Subscription* (along with Auden and Jacques Barzun—that collective enterprise might have been titled Sheep May Safely Graze). Except for his fine essay on *Lolita* re-

[2] There is still to come, as I understand it, a collection of his letters. Diana Trilling, who has edited the whole project, includes at the end of this volume (*Speaking of Literature and Society*) her very interesting memoir of Trilling as a young instructor at Columbia ("Lionel Trilling: A Jew at Columbia").

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printed here, the best of those reviews have already been republished as *A Gathering of Fugitives.* But looked at as a whole, this Uniform Edition of Trilling's works reminds us that his great contributions as a writer were the collections of essays on speculative topics and on particular artists, written in the 1940s, '50s and early '60s, and published in *The Liberal Imagination* ("Reality in America," "Manners, Morals and the Novel"), *The Opposing Self* (particularly its considerations of Keats, Howells, Jane Austen), and *Beyond Culture* (the analysis of Leavis vs. Snow, reread, is marvelous). With that central period pretty completely mined, this last collection inevitably has a leftover feel about it.

Still there are enough surprises to widen my notion of the range of writers Trilling thought and wrote about. It is good to have resurrected an early piece about D. H. Lawrence (but why did he never write at further length about him?) on the occasion of that writer's death in 1930. Trilling not only speaks clearly and sharply about Lawrence's attitudes toward sex and how they differed from Freud's, but also takes the trouble to respond to Wyndham Lewis' attack (in *Paleface*) on Lawrence. The young critic, all of age 25, has the temerity to begin his piece as follows: "From a purely literary point of view, D. H. Lawrence lies a little beyond the grasp of our criticism." Already that royal We was creeping in! It is interesting though to see how much Trilling, whom no one ever accused of being an aesthete, was concerned early on with trying to approach writers from a purely literary point of view, even when they were American and "social" in their coloring. Some of the best writing in this volume occurs in reviews from the late 1930s of books by Willa Cather, Dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway, and (later on) John O'Hara. The just appreciation of *My Lost Lady;* the willingness to admire "improvisational style" in the early novels of Lewis (even though the review is of *Bethel Merriday* which belongs to that part of Lewis' work Trilling calls The Unhappy Story); the surprisingly sympathetic response to O'Hara, comparing him at one point and without apology to Kafka—these were all new to me and I suspect will be so to most readers, even those familiar with Trilling's other work.

I was impressed once more by the sanity of this man who, responding to one of those awful *Partisan Review* symposia questions about "Literature as an Institution" said that when he tried to think about literature in such terms "my curiosity wilts and my spirits sink." He was quite comfortable, he added, in liking and respecting literature as a "trade." Writing in the *Kenyon Review* in 1940 on how our talk about literature may well get substituted for the thing itself, he found a corrective to such abstractness in the "minimal method" of the music critic B. H. Haggin "which limits itself to the elucidation of the form and the isolation of the various parts of the piece." This insistence on the primacy of literary form was at least in part a reaction to the 1930s' politicizing of literature, but it deepened as Trilling grew older. He was never much of a verbal critic, and he always spoke as if poems stated "doctrines" or "told" us this or that about life. (There is, typically, almost nothing about poetry in this collection, aside

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from some admiration for Whitman.) But he cared about form, about the "figure" various novels or poems made (see his collected prefaces to *The Experience of Literature,* with their pertinent comments on "Tyger! Tyger!" or "Resolution and Independence" or *The Dead*) and he never put literature in a back seat to any other "trade." If it seems too even-handed of me to presume that Trilling's mainly unhumorous criticism can be recommended seriously by the same person who previously held out Clive James's breezy work for praise, let me quote from Trilling's concluding paragraph to his review of a justifiably forgotten conference on "The Humanities" which, amazingly enough, met in Denver in 1944. Why bother to reprint this short, ephemeral review? Only for its concluding paragraph, where Trilling deals with the symposium's belief that studying The Humanities and putting them to work for society, will make us somehow better. He says in reply, "But really they are only a lot of great books, music, and pictures, extremely interesting for teachers to talk about, extremely interesting to students when they are required to turn their minds to them. They will not save society or reform it." The best fate I can see for Trilling's own work is that it will become, has already become for me, part of that extremely interesting segment of The Humanities called literature.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Life Direct and the Indifferential Calculus

WHEN HE WAS EDITOR OF *The English Review* Ford Madox Hueffer printed Lawrence for the first time and amiably introduced him to everybody at parties as "a genius!" but Hueffer was himself a novelist in the Flaubertian tradition and thought every other modern novelist, even a genius, had no business being anything else; he disparaged the confessional expansiveness of Lawrence's fiction; kept enjoining him to adopt Flaubert's ironic detachment, though Lawrence found it "as tiresome as the infant's bib which . . . [Hueffer] says I wear for my mewling and puking"; kept arguing that "prose *must* be impersonal, like . . . Flaubert." But Lawrence held fast: "I say no."[1] Even mewling and puking seemed to Lawrence better than being above and beyond it all. Later, trying to interest a publisher's reader in the manuscript of the novel whose eventual title would be *Sons and Lovers,* Lawrence felt obliged to concede that "It's not so strongly concentric as the fashionable folk under French influence—you see I suffered badly from Hueffer re Flaubert and perfection—want it. It may seem loose—and I may cut the childhood part—if you think better so—and perhaps you'll want me to spoil some of the good stuff. But," he obstinately summed up, "it is rather great." He was right: it is; nevertheless his correspondent (Walter de la Mare, who gets a double demerit because he was a good enough writer himself to have had an inkling of what he was dealing with but took the fashionable attitude toward this loose and all-too-English chronicle) didn't agree, recommended against it, and the publisher turned it down. Lawrence, already self-exiled to Italy for the sake of love and art, began to suspect that not only literary England but the whole damned country had been appropriated by the French: "I have read *Anna of the Five Towns* today. . . . I hate Bennett's resignation. Tragedy ought really to be a great kick at misery. But *Anna* . . . seems like an acceptance—so does all the modern stuff since Flaubert. I hate it. I want to wash again quick, wash off England, the oldness and grubbiness and despair."

Six years earlier (in 1906) Joyce, self-exiled to Italy for the sake of love and art, was deciding that on the contrary it would be a good thing if England and, it goes without saying, Ireland were appropriated by the French: "Why are English novels so terribly boring? . . . Without boasting I think I have little or nothing to learn from English novelists"[2]; he amuses himself guying one of Hardy's stories: "Servant-wife blows her

[1] THE LETTERS OF D. H. LAWRENCE, Vol. I (September 1901–May 1913), ed. *James I. Boulton.* Cambridge University Press. $29.50.

[2] SELECTED LETTERS OF JAMES JOYCE, ed. *Richard Ellmann.* Viking. $18.95.

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nose in the letter and lawyer confronts the mistress. She confesses. Then they talk a page or so of copybook talk (as distinguished from servant's ditto). She weeps but he is stern. Is this as near as T. H. can get to life, I wonder?" and three days later he has settled down happily with Octave Mirbeau's *Sebastien Roch*—"It must be difficult to succeed in France where nearly everyone writes well." Writing well is the ticket: art is power; and the young artist has such confidence in the power of art that it's almost appalling when he experiences a moment of doubt: "Is it possible," Joyce writes to his brother, "that, after all, men of letters are no more than entertainers?" but no, it isn't possible, it had better not be, and "These discouraging reflections arise perhaps from my surroundings." He is unknown and unpublished, his book of poems has just been rejected by the same publisher who a few years later will reject *Sons and Lovers*; friendless and without enough money even to scrape along on in a remote and unfamiliar city, passing most of his day working at mind-boggling ill-paid jobs, writing letters to his brother—what would artists do without brothers!—in which he vivaciously discusses and exemplifies the power of art and irritably or ironically begs enough money to stay alive and keep from being put out on the street; awaiting the birth of their first child to the woman who has accompanied him without benefit of clergy in his voluntary flight from priest-ridden Ireland and who isn't thriving among these foreigners: "Nora seems to me to be in very poor health. All yesterday and the day before she has been laid up with neuralgia and pains and today she seems to be dropping down with weakness. It is very difficult for either of us to enjoy life in these circumstances." But England and Ireland were impossible. Twenty-five years later Joyce would dismiss with exasperation another English novelist he had nothing to learn from: "I read the first 2 pages of the usual sloppy English and . . . [Stuart Gilbert] read me a lyrical bit about nudism in a wood and the end which is a piece of propaganda in favour of something which, outside of D. H. L.'s country at any rate, makes all the propaganda for itself": the book is *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; but it would be more useful to have his comments on *Sons and Lovers* or some of the early short stories, which wouldn't make such stationary targets.

As for Flaubert himself, art isn't only power, it's the only power. He kept trying to explain to his mistress (whom the French make do with in default of brothers) that she had "a genuine love of art, but not the religion of art": "You do not admire enough, you do not respect enough."[3] Still worse: "I must scold you about something that shocks and scandalizes me, namely how little you care about Art now. You care about fame—so be it: I approve; but Art, the only true and good thing in life! Can you compare any earthly love to it? Can you prefer the adoration of some relative beauty to the cult of the True?" "What is there worth discussing except Art?" "Only the Idea is eternal and necessary. There are no more artists as they once existed, artists whose loves and minds were the blind instruments of the appetite for the beautiful, God's organs by

[3] THE LETTERS OF GUSTAVE FLAUBERT 1830–1857, ed. *Francis Steegmuller*. Belknap Press. $12.50.

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means of which he demonstrated to himself his own existence." The artist is the vessel of power—"Art is not interested in the personality of the artist"—and the greater the artist the more impersonal and unknowable the vessel: Flaubert even imagines that "who can tell me what Shakespeare loved, hated, or felt?" is a rhetorical question (so does Matthew Arnold in his solemn sonnet on the Bard: "Others abide our question. Thou art free"); in brief, O frabjous Shakespeare, Thou art Art, "which is a self-sufficient principle" and once it has used up the artist discards him like Kleenex: the artist for art's sake (not, as Lawrence rebelliously insists, "art for my sake"). To the artist life is trivial, a distraction (as for living, our mistresses will do that for us), "If you participate actively in life, you don't see it clearly: you suffer from it too much or enjoy it too much. The artist, to my way of thinking, is a monstrosity, something outside nature." Nature is merely the pretext for art; the great stage of fools for the ironic observer in the audience ("It's a sad thing to be the only spectator at a farce," hisses Lawrence from the wings). Indeed Flaubert's point is there isn't any nature, there's only art, only style: "What seems beautiful to me, what I should like to write, is a book about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external, which would be held together by the internal strength of its style, just as the earth, suspended in the void, depends on nothing external for its support; a book which would have almost no subject, or at least in which the subject would be almost invisible, if such a thing is possible. The finest works are those that contain the least matter; the closer expression comes to thought, the closer language comes to coinciding and merging with it, the finer the result. I believe the future of Art lies in this direction." And lo! the future is here. "Prose was born yesterday," says the proud father: "you have to keep that in mind"; "the novel has only just been born: it awaits its Homer. What a man Balzac would have been, had he known how to write! But," Flaubert concludes with unexpected generosity and his own passing moment of doubt, "that was the only thing he lacked. An artist, after all, would not have done so much, would not have had that amplitude." Which is his sole acknowledgment of the possibility that art may contain and express matters more important than art.

He was a bed-ridden invalid, victim of epilepsy, at twenty-two; afterward except for minor excursions to visit his mistress and a major one—his long-dreamed-of "voyage to the Orient" with his friend Maxime DuCamp, which according to Flaubert's detailed and explicit letters to friends at home was a year-and-a-half tour of all the brothels and bathhouses of Egypt and the Middle East—he remains behind the walls of his mother's house in a provincial town far from Paris, perfecting his art, fending off his mistress (who wants his presence not his letters) and the importunate DuCamp, who now lives in Paris and keeps urging him to move there and make a career for himself; but Flaubert isn't having any:

> I'll go to Paris for the winter. I'll be a man like other men. I'll lead a life given over to love affairs and scheming. I'll have to do many things that will revolt me and that I find lamentable in advance. Now: am I

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> made for all that? . . . Often, when I am faced with doing no matter what, I am overwhelmed by weariness and am ready to die of boredom; and I grasp even the most straightforward idea only by dint of great effort. My youth (you knew only its latter phase) steeped me in an opiate of boredom, sufficient for the remainder of my days. I hate life. There: I have said it; I'll not take it back. Yes, life; and everything that reminds me that life must be borne. It bores me to eat, to dress, to stand on my feet, etc. I have dragged this hatred everywhere, wherever I have been at school, in Rouen, in Paris, on the Nile. . . .

Flaubert was thirty, and had just begun *Madame Bovary*. DuCamp made the mistake of supposing that Flaubert wanted a plain blunt bracing rejoinder (and paid for it with the end of their intimacy):

> Your way of life involves two great drawbacks:
>
> 1. It has tied you to your mother, hand and foot. It has given you the terrible habit of depending on others where your everyday life is concerned, and of thinking only of your *subjective* self and never of your *objective* self.
>
> 2. It has encased you completely within your own personality. You know how *you* live, but not how others live. Look about you as you may, you see only yourself; and in everything you have written, you have portrayed only yourself.
>
> Those are the two great flaws in your way of life; and the fact is that it is weighing on you, boring you, and making you think that you "hate life," whereas it is simply *your* life that you hate.

The demon writer isn't having any of *that*, thank you; and his impassive mask is a way of persuading readers that the Almighty Himself endorses every misanthropic commonplace: when Flaubert has Emma Bovary "discover in adultery all the banalities of marriage," it isn't he but God and Emma who strike a blow at adultery and marriage and incidentally at every other prospect of pleasure. One critic is enchanted by the letters of this "literary colossus" because "Here we may see the total man . . . without his impassive mask," an image which suggests a monumental figure on the Greek stage clomping toward his doom but doesn't explain why modern man when he grasps the sacred ballpoint has to dress himself up as if for Halloween: Why, for instance, shouldn't the man who writes the letters wear the impassive mask and the man who writes the novels express himself totally? "The stories in *Dubliners* seem to be indisputably well done but," worries Joyce, "after all, perhaps many people could do them as well. I am not rewarded by any feeling of having overcome difficulties." The indifferent artist paring his fingernails is cold comfort to the anxious young man who keeps biting them to the quick. If writing is mere manna from the intense inane, if it isn't done by anybody at all (Flaubert the father of prose is also godfather of the intense inanities of structuralism), then it can be done by just anybody: e.g. the anonymous "mean" style of *Dubliners* (relieved only by patches of pretty pathos filched from

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the Celtic twilight of AE or Yeats that in his letters Joyce can't abide). On the other hand Joyce the young man (not the young artist), away from his wife for a few weeks, misses her so painfully that he doesn't turn out neat little public epiphanies (to show the back of his elegant hand to priest-ridden Ireland and its dead capital), instead he uses his Irish blarney (and his hatred of the priests) in a series of private letters to work her up to a pitch of excitement where he can take the risk of expressing, if not the total man, at least a recognizable man with all of a man's (as Joyce in a letter to his brother calls it) "extraordinary cerebral sexualism":

> Darling, do not be offended at what I wrote. You thank me for the beautiful name I gave you. Yes, dear, it is a nice name "My beautiful wild flower of the hedges! My dark-blue, rain-drenched flower!" You see I am a little of the poet still. I am giving you a lovely book for a present too: and it is a poet's present for the woman he loves. *But*, side by side and inside this spiritual love I have for you there is also a wild beast-like craving for every inch of your body, for every secret and shameful part of it, for every odour and act of it. My love for you allows me to pray to the spirit of eternal beauty and tenderness mirrored in your eyes or to fling you down under me on that soft belly of yours and fuck you up behind, like a hog riding a sow, glorying in the very stink and sweat that rises from your arse, glorying in the open shame of your upturned dress and white girlish drawers and in the confusion of your flushed cheeks and tangled hair. It allows me to burst into tears of pity and love at some slight word, to tremble with love for you at the sounding of some chord or cadence of music or to lie head and tails with you feeling your fingers fondling and tickling my ballocks or stuck up in me behind and your hot lips sucking off my cock while my head is wedged in between your fat thighs, my hands clutching the round cushions of your bum and my tongue licking ravenously up your rank red cunt. I have taught you almost to swoon at the hearing of my voice singing or murmuring to your soul the passion and sorrow and mystery of life and at the same time have taught you to make filthy signs to me with your lips and tongue, to provoke me by obscene touches and noises, and even to do in my presence the most shameful and filthy act of the body. You remember the day you pulled up your clothes and let me lie under you looking up at you while you did it? Then you were ashamed even to meet my eyes.
>
> You are mine, darling, mine! I love you. All I have written above is only a moment or two of brutal madness. The last drop of seed has hardly been squirted up your cunt . . .

—and so on and so forth (maybe he ought to have phoned instead: Reach out and touch someone): in comparison with which Leopold Bloom (not to mention Stephen Dedalus or the poet and novelist James Joyce) is only your average run-of-the-mill literary colossus all dressed up in his impassive mask, indifferent, paring his fingernails.

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It becomes an issue of integrity. When Lawrence's mother is dying of cancer, he describes the circumstances in a letter to a woman who is barely an acquaintance:

> I did not know where you were. I am glad you wrote to me.
>
> I have been at home now ten days. My mother is very near the end. Today I have been to Leicester. I did not get home till half past nine. Then I ran upstairs. The pains had been again.
>
> "Oh my dear" I said, "is it the pains?"
>
> "Not pain now—Oh the weariness" she moaned, so that I could hardly hear her. I wish she could die tonight.
>
> My sister and I do all the nursing. My sister is only 22. I sit upstairs hours and hours, till I wonder if ever it were true that I was at London. I seem to have died since, and that is an old life, dreamy.
>
> I will tell you. My mother was a clever, ironical delicately moulded woman, of good, old burgher descent. She married below her. My father was dark, ruddy, with a fine laugh. He is a coal miner. He was one of the sanguine temperament, warm and hearty, but unstable: he lacked principle, as my mother would have said. He deceived her and lied to her. She despised him—he drank.
>
> Their marriage life has been one carnal, bloody fight. I was born hating my father: as early as ever I can remember, I shivered with horror when he touched me. He was very bad before I was born.
>
> This has been a kind of bond between me and my mother. We have loved each other, almost with a husband and wife love, as well as filial and maternal. We knew each other by instinct. She said to my aunt—about me:
>
> "But it has been different with him. He has seemed to be part of me."—and that is the real case. We have been like one, so sensitive to each other that we never needed words. It has been rather terrible, and has made me, in some respects, abnormal. . . .

And the letter goes on to complete the telling of the same story that Lawrence dramatizes and expands to the length of a novel in *Sons and Lovers*, where his mother is the heroine and immortal beloved and moreover his father takes the opportunity that the son belatedly gives him to affirm and occupy his own blessed space (as Lawrence the novelist takes the opportunities he is given by Lawrence the son and lover):

> He always made his own breakfast. Being a man who rose early and had plenty of time he did not, as some miners do, drag his wife out of bed at six o'clock. At five, sometimes earlier, he woke, got straight out of bed, and went downstairs. When she could not sleep, his wife lay waiting for this time, as for a period of peace. The only real rest seemed to be when he was out of the house.
>
> He went downstairs in his shirt and then struggled into his pit-trousers, which were left on the hearth to warm all night. There was always a fire, because Mrs. Morel raked. And the first sound in the house was the bang, bang of the poker against the raker, as Morel smashed the re-

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mainder of the coal to make the kettle, which was filled and left on the hob, finally boil. His cup and knife and fork, all he wanted except just the food, was laid ready on the table on a newspaper. Then he got his breakfast, made the tea, packed the bottom of the doors with rugs to shut out the draught, piled a big fire, and sat down to an hour of joy. He toasted his bacon on a fork and caught the drops of fat on his bread; then he put the rasher on his thick slice of bread, and cut off chunks with a clasp-knife, poured his tea into his saucer, and was happy. . . .

Flaubert like Lawrence was exceptionally devoted to his mother, though art is so much more important that he doesn't for quite a while remember to reassure her in the letter in which he rather tactlessly asserts that the artist can't afford to feel a thing but has to live outside life and (doesn't his mother occupy any space?) "alone":

If a man, whether of low or high degree, wishes to meddle with God's works, he must begin, if only as a healthy precaution, by putting himself in a position where he cannot be made a fool of. You can depict wine, love, women and glory on the condition that you're not a drunkard, a lover, a husband, or a private in the ranks. If you participate actively in life, you don't see it clearly: you suffer from it too much or enjoy it too much. The artist, to my way of thinking, is a monstrosity, something outside nature. All the misfortunes Providence inflicts on him come from his stubbornness in denying that axiom. He suffers from that denial and makes others suffer. Ask women who have loved poets, or men who have loved actresses. So (and this is my conclusion) I am resigned to living as I have lived: alone, with my throng of great men as my only cronies—a bear, with my bear-rug as company. I care nothing for the world, for the future, for what people will say, for any kind of establishment, or even for literary renown, which in the past I used to lie awake so many nights dreaming about. That is what I am like; such is my character.

Suddenly it occurs to him that he is, after all, addresssing the woman in whose presumably negligible company he will be living, as he insists, "alone," all by himself, without any company save that of the gracious dead:

The devil take me if I know why I've written you these two pages of tirade, poor dear. No, no: when I think of your sweet face, so sad and loving, and of the joy I have in living with you, who are so full of serenity and such grave charm, I know very well that I shall never love another woman as I do you. You will have no rival, never fear! The senses or a momentary fancy will not take the place of what lies locked in the fastness of a triple sanctuary . . . [Flaubert's ellipsis]

Still, the novelist never takes the opportunity that the son and lover gives him: or the senses are locked away forever from the only mystery

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that might shake them up: none of the women in Flaubert's fiction resembles the woman of that last paragraph; if they aren't imbecile plaster saints like Félicité in *A Simple Heart* they're sardonic or pathetic testimony to the hopelessness of marriage, adultery, and life in general—

> Bút it was above all at mealtimes that she could bear it no longer, in that little room on the ground floor, with the smoking stove, the creaking door, the oozing walls, the damp floor-tiles; all the bitterness of life seemed to be served to her on her plate, and, with the steam from the boiled beef, there rose from the depths of her soul other exhalations as it were of disgust. Charles was a slow eater; she would nibble a few hazel-nuts, or else, leaning on her elbow, would amuse herself making marks on the oilcloth with the point of her table-knife.

I choose this paragraph from *Madame Bovary* because it's the text for a famous exercise in admiration by Erich Auerbach in *Mimesis;* and because, just as Lawrence's description of Walter Morel's "hour of joy" demonstrates that life is always possible, so Flaubert's description of the Bovarys at table demonstrates that bourgeois routine is suffocating, the provinces are deadly, marriage is loathsome (not that some people have trouble enjoying life; not that some relationships go wrong, or are wrong from the beginning): it's a giveaway that the paragraph would present a cosy domestic scene, which Flaubert would rather have died than written, if one substitutes "loved" for "could bear it no longer, in"; "joy" for "bitterness"; "contentment" for "disgust": the point of Flaubert's paragraph is that every sensation or perception has no other purpose than to reinforce the inference that life is impossible except for the observer who imperturbably reports it. Flaubert's satisfaction in writing life off is so much greater than any satisfaction available to his characters that his only feasible subject is the satisfaction he takes in writing life off; and so he has arrived at his artistic ideal, "a book about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external."

Furthermore Flaubert's personal enthusiasm when he explains to his mother why the artist has to dispense with personality and enthusiasm produces better, fuller, richer, livelier writing than his novels; just as Joyce's personal enthusiasm in his letters, the street-gamin cheekiness and wit, the sheer haste to get back to work at the bank or the language class or back to guileless Nora: "I really can't write. Nora is trying on a pair of drawers at the wardrobe"; "At present she is licking jam off a piece of paper. She is very well, wears a veil now and looks very pretty. Just now she came in and said 'The landlady has her hen laying out there. O, *he's* after laying a lovely egg.' Jaysus! O Jaysus!": just as Joyce's intellectual appetite trammeled by life but not for the moment by theories of art produces in his letters all sorts of bonuses, from a vigorous and affectionate appreciation of Tolstoy (who was still alive and kicking and probably less "genuinely spiritual" than Joyce imagined)—

> As for Tolstoy, I disagree with you altogether. Tolstoy is a magnificent writer. He is never dull, never stupid, never tired, never pedantic, never

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theatrical! He is head and shoulders over the others. I don't take him very seriously as a Christian saint. I think he has a very genuine spiritual nature but I suspect that he speaks the very best Russian with a St Petersburg accent and remembers the Christian name of his great-great-grandfather (this, I find, is at the bottom of the essentially feudal art of Russia). I see that he wrote a 13 column letter to *The Times* of London attacking governments. Even the English "liberal" papers are indignant. Not merely does he attack armaments, he even alludes to the Tsar as a "weak-minded Hussar officer, standing below the intellectual level of most of his subjects, grossly superstitious and of coarse tastes." The English liberals are shocked: they would call him vulgar but that they know he is a prince. . . .

—to a "cinematographic" account of his daily miseries in Rome:

Do you imagine you are corresponding with the indifferential calculus that you object to my vituperation on Italy and Rome. What the hell else would I do? If you had to traipse about a city, accompanied by a plaintive woman with infant (also plaintive), run up stairs, ring a bell, "Chi c'è?" "Camera" "Chi c'è?" "Camera!" ["Who's there?" "Room!"] No go: room too small or too dear: won't have children, single man only, no kitchen. "Arrivederla!" Down again. Rush off: give a lesson for 9½d, rush back to bank, etc etc. Am sending MS to John Long by same post. Didn't change anything. No pen, no ink, no table, no room, no time, no quiet, no inclination. Never mind, it will be back in a week or so. . . . The Italian imagination is like a cinematograph, observe the style of my letter. Wurruk is more dissipating than dissipation. Thanks for Whitman's poems. What long flowing lines he writes. Kick in the arse for the following. G. K. C. : G. B. S. : S. L.: H. J.: G. R. [Chesterton, Shaw, Sidney Lee, Henry James, Grant Richards (the publisher who accepted *Dubliners* but didn't publish it)]. Kicks in the arse all round, in fact.

Not only can he never learn to love the Italians, he doesn't scruple to show strong and personal feelings (none of the indifferential calculus of art) in expressing his distaste:

I have been trying to read Carducci's verses, induced by the fact that he died unfortified by the rites of R. C. C. But not only does it not interest me: it even seems to me false and exaggerated. I dislike Italian verse. I find Italian men lacking in delicacy and virility. They are intelligent as a rule and clever but babyish. Of delicacy neither their men nor their women have a scrap. I don't so much object to its absence in the latter. The day of Bruno's memorial procession I was standing among the crowd waiting for the cortege to appear. It was a murky day and, being Sunday, I had not washed. I was wearing a white felt hat, faded by reason of heavy rains. Scholz's five crown cloak hung bawways [arseways] on me. My boots, being Sunday, were coated with a week's dirt and I was in need of a shave. In fact, I was a horrible ex-

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> ample of free thought. Near me were two good-looking young women, females, of the people, that is. They were in charge of an elderly woman and a middle-aged man. They were low-sized and quince-coloured in the face with amiable dog's eyes. One of them had a trinket on a long chain and this she constantly raised slowly to her lips and rested it there, slowly parting them, all the time gazing tranquilly about her. I watched her do this for quite a long time until I perceived that the trinket was a miniature revolver! I tried to explain my sensation to one or two Italians, narrating the fact as best I could. They saw nothing strange in it or typical or significant. One of them told me that many Italian women wear a cazzo [prick] as a trinket and after that they talked to their heart's content about cazzo and Co—a topic which, in my opinion, it requires a great deal of talent or else a great deal of courage to render in any way interesting. When I enter the bank in the morning I wait for someone to announce something about either his cazzo, culo [arse] or coglioni [balls]. This usually happens before a quarter to nine.

A fascinating and not by any means inconsistent complaint from the R. C. apostate who would write *Ulysses* as well as those cazzo-culo-coglioni letters to Nora.

Life direct, as in this homesick outburst, is what Flaubert and Joyce have convinced themselves the man may never get quite clear of but the artist has nothing to do with. What they can't admit is that art is overrated: which artists, faking and fumbling it together out of spit and toothpicks, should know best of all. Lawrence writes his current girlfriend that he has taken *The Red and the Black* out of the library: "I shall enjoy it"; but he adds wistfully, "The worst of being a novelist, and having dreams and fancies, is that you know all this is fiction. You know the inanimate dumminess of them—and demand life direct like a blow." Even if, as Flaubert would object, it puts you in a position where you can be made a fool of.

A year later Lawrence, having eloped to the Continent with somebody else's wife, writes to a friend back home:

> I love Frieda so much I don't like to talk about it. I never knew what love was before. She wanted me to write to you. I want you and her to be friends always. Some time perhaps she—perhaps we—shall need you. Then you'll be good to us, won't you?
>
> The world is wonderful and beautiful and good beyond one's wildest imagination. Never, never, never could one conceive what love is, beforehand, never. Life *can* be great—quite god-like. It *can* be so. God be thanked I have proved it.
>
> You might write to us here. Our week of honeymoon is over. Lord, it was lovely. But this—do I like this better?—I like it so much. Don't tell anybody. This is only for the good to know. Write to us.

It didn't last forever, but then neither does art.

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JEFFERSON HUNTER

The Court-Suit Laureates

> Up! up! my friend, and quit your books,
> Or surely you'll grow double;
> Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks;
> Why all this toil and trouble?

So Wordsworth scolded the nineteen-year-old Hazlitt at Alfoxden in 1798—though not in verse, presumably. A few months later, after one of those sessions of walking up and down and mumbling or roaring to himself which constituted his creative discipline, Wordsworth remade his advice as one of the poems of *Lyrical Ballads*. "The Tables Turned" might well stand as epigraph for Hunter Davies' biography of the poet, which offers readers the chance to get up from the mass of critical writings about Wordsworth and seek his nature in a "straightforward narrative of his life and times."[1] Davies has polite things to say about his scholarly predecessors, including Mary Moorman, author of the definitive life, but he cheerfully identifies himself as an outsider, even a cheeky outsider, who will prefer the poet to the poetry and so avoid the dangers of murdering by dissection.

There is something appealing about this aim. The egotistical sublimity surrounding so much writing by and about Wordsworth is replaced here by a journalistic directness in getting at the story. Davies gives the events of Wordsworth's life a narrative shape (no mean achievement for the later, duller years of distributing stamps and writing ecclesiastical sonnets) and is helpfully informative about "the times," from the sleepy corrupt Cambridge of the late 1780s to the tourist-invaded Lake District of Wordsworth's old age. Those already knowledgeable about the poet will not find anything new here, but they will find an uncluttered report. Uncluttered and impudently casual, some might say. Davies reports that after taking his degree Wordsworth spent the next few months "bumming around" in London. The early years in Dove Cottage with Coleridge and Dorothy were an embryo "hippy life," while Allan Bank housed a veritable "commune." Dorothy's letters were almost always "bitchy" about Sara Coleridge. Incongruous language for the Laureate and his circle, but then it seems only right that the poet who once claimed to be speaking in the language of ordinary men should occasionally be spoken about in the language of ordinary men.

A different and pleasanter ordinary language is brought into the book when Davies quotes Canon Rawnsley's splendid *Recollections of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmorland*:

[1] WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, by *Hunter Davies*. Atheneum. $17.95.

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> Mrs Wudsworth would say 'ring the bell' but he wouldn't stir. 'Goa and see what he's doing,' she'd say, and we wad goa up to study door and hear him mumbling and bumming through it. 'Dinner's ready, sir,' I'd ca' out. He'd goa mumbling on like a deaf man, ya see. And sometimes Mrs Wudsworth 'ud say, 'Goa and brek a bottle, or let a dish fall just outside door in passage.' Eh dear, that maistly would bring him out . . .

The chattiness of this servant at Rydal Mount, like the unstudied but curiously moving entries about daily life which Dorothy made in her journal (cooking late-night porridge for Coleridge, hoping for ice-skating weather, reading her brother to sleep), reveals a Wordsworth who could be like other men, by turns silly, infuriating, and kind. It is possible to feel an affection for such a man, and to understand the affection the man addressed to the humble subjects of his poems—the old Cumberland beggar with his palsied slowness, Michael with his helpless revisitings of the unbuilt sheepfold, as single-minded and lonely in their way as Wordsworth's mumblings behind the door.

This biography is too often chatty itself and too often not about Wordsworth. The River Cocker—"not exactly a poetic name"—flows not far from Wordsworth's birthplace. Five children in six years (the spacing of the Wordsworth family) would be considered rather impetuous today. Still-born infants or early childhood deaths were unfortunately more than common back in the 1770s. Wordsworth skated on the ice of Esthwaite Water, but our winters today seem positively Mediterranean. So, too, today do writers get a lot of help, from dictating machines to electric typewriters, but Wordsworth had only Dorothy as amanuensis. These reassurances that the past really is different from the present, if that is what they are, make Davies seem more naive than the rest of his book shows him to be, and they are certainly unnecessary. No one interested in reading a life of Wordsworth in the first place needs to be told that infant deaths were common in the eighteenth century, still less (Davies is describing Dora Wordsworth's falling asleep while being rowed across Ullswater) that that is "what so often happens to toddlers on long journeys."

The impertinences grow less frequent as the book goes on and Davies assumes the heavy task facing all biographers of Wordsworth, chronicling the change in Wordsworth's personality, the almost imperceptibly slow loss of his imaginative power. On one side of, say, 1805, we have a restless, unsatisfied discoverer of grievances, the Wordsworth who on walks across Salisbury Plain or Barton Fell stopped beggars to find out how he could make them social victims. He tramped through the Revolution in France and fathered a child by Annette Vallon. Together with Coleridge he was thought such a radical—such a friend of France—that the Home Office sent an agent, one G. Walsh, to spy on them at Alfoxden and Nether Stowey. (In an agreeably ironic turn of events, as Davies points out, Walsh's reports have become valuable sources of information about the

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poets' life in the West Country.) On the other side of 1805 we have the Wordsworth of the "Ode to Duty," the patriot and Francophobe, the proprietor of Rydal Mount, and eventually the hardened old Tory who so disappointed the poets of the rising generation. In 1813 Wordsworth went to dine with the same Bishop of Llandaff he had excoriated in a pamphlet of 1794.

In 1805 Wordsworth was deeply grieved by his brother John's death in shipwreck. The "Elegiac Stanzas" he wrote in response to his grief associate him with a "huge Castle" standing far above and untouched by fierce winds and trampling waves. The poem leaves him welcoming stoic virtues of fortitude and patient cheer, "Cased," like the Castle itself, "in the unfeeling armor of old time." Is unfeelingness really a quality to be desired in any poet, in any age? In 1805 also Wordsworth completed the thirteen-book *Prelude,* thus ending his most sustained exercise in recollection. Much more work would go into the poem later, but it would not be work prompted by memory, Wordsworth's essential resource. Memory gave him sharply particularized scenes and their attendant emotions to be fashioned into poetry. When he lost command of his own past, as he did gradually, over the years, he had left as resources chiefly verbal finickiness, religious caution, and epic pretentiousness. In revising *The Prelude* Wordsworth changed

> On the ground I lay
> Passing through many thoughts, yet mainly such
> As to myself pertained. I made a choice
> Of one sweet Vale . . . (1805)

to

> Many were the thoughts
> Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
> Of a known Vale . . . (1850)

The passive voice is suited to the poem's new Miltonic dignity, but in removing the "I" Wordsworth has betrayed the simplicity of his past.

Keeping strictly to his narrative, Hunter Davies does not pause to analyze "Elegiac Stanzas," *The Prelude,* or any of the other poetry: a loss, but one easily made up with the aid of other books. It is scarcely a loss at all that Davies does not use the life to illuminate the poetry. In fact, no one can do that very effectively. The workings of Wordsworth's imagination remain stubbornly resistant to narrative exposition or analysis, even analysis by Wordsworth. We can learn that Wordsworth was flattered by the attentions of the great, that he fell deeply in love with his wife after ten years of marriage (so Davies claims, relying on some recently discovered correspondence), or that in extreme old age he grew more tolerant in his political opinions, but these or other biographical facts do not begin to

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explain what happened when (for example) Wordsworth tramped up and down in his odd way and shaped a fragmentary observation about an old man traveling into "Animal Tranquillity and Decay":

> every limb,
> His look and bending figure, all bespeak
> A man who does not move with pain, but moves
> With thought.—He is insensibly subdued
> To settled quiet.

When Wordsworth was named Laureate and presented at Court, he borrowed a court-suit from the old poet Samuel Rogers. Seven years later Tennyson borrowed the same suit for his presentation as Wordsworth's successor. The coincidence neatly emphasizes the handing on of poetic honors and the similarity of two careers. Each man was a provincial, each was capable of visionary imaginings, each was wild or at least feckless in youth, each became thoroughly respectable with age. All this is easy enough to see. Robert Bernard Martin's excellent biography of Tennyson, however, reveals a subtler parallel between Tennyson and a different poet.[2] In 1837 the Tennysons moved to High Beech in Essex, and there, in the grounds of Dr. Matthew Allen's insane asylum, the poet had ample opportunity to meet John Clare, who had given vent in verse to his feelings about a wretchedly unhappy childhood, and who had fallen into despondency and madness. Tennyson himself suffered greatly as a child; Tennyson himself was treated by Allen as a voluntary patient, and though he was never mad, in his own or anyone else's estimation, he feared madness for much of the first half of his life. The chief theme of Professor Martin's *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* is the risk Tennyson ran of becoming a figure like Clare. The poet's unquiet heart constantly threatened him with something worse—a collapse into chaotic emotion and the self-destructiveness of all the male Tennysons—and had always to be regulated by the discipline of writing.

What Tennyson feared, specifically, was epilepsy, a disorder morally tainted in the nineteenth century (it was linked with masturbation). Professor Martin argues that Tennyson's baptism was hurried because he had seizures as a newborn, and that later Tennyson must have been terrified by the close resemblance of his visionary trances to the family disease. No doubt a fear of passing epilepsy on to children helped to keep Tennyson from marrying until the age of forty-one. Life with the tirelessly devoted Emily Sellwood controlled these fears, but in any case by the time he felt able to marry Tennyson had already done for himself what was necessary. He had controlled his life by creating the rich orderliness of his poetry. Poetry was Tennyson's narcotic, the benign equivalent of his brother Charles' opium addiction. In his own terms it was the Palace of

[2] TENNYSON: The Unquiet Heart, by *Robert Bernard Martin.* Oxford University Press. $29.95.

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Art to which he would always be drawn, in spite of Hallam's or Gladstone's or Carlyle's efforts to drag him outside. Poetry was personally useful to Tennyson. Whatever the writing of "In Memoriam A. H. H. " contributed to the healing of his grief at Hallam's death (Professor Martin suggests that the grief was more quickly healed than one might assume), it certainly contributed to Tennyson's triumph over his crotchety, snobbish relations. The author of "Strong Son of God, immortal love" could hardly be despised.

Part of the pleasure of reading this biography lies in following the tale of all the extravagantly unhappy and eccentric Tennysons. The poet's grandfather was grasping, tyrannical, and violently moody; his father was addicted to drugs and alcohol and given to flights of grandiose fantasy; his uncle Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt (as he became) built Bayons Manor as the architectural expression of his snobbishness but was never accepted by County society. Tennyson's brother Septimus was merely being more self-dramatizing than the rest of the family on the occasion when he arose from the hearth-rug where he had been lying, extended a hand to a visitor, and introduced himself as "Septimus, the most morbid of the Tennysons." Even the decorous Emily Tennyson, who had been engaged to Hallam, grew eccentric with age: at table she fed alternate mouthfuls to the pet dog in her lap and the raven tethered to her wrist. Small wonder that in youthful theatricals Tennyson took the part of Malvolio, or that he tended to separate himself from his family as he grew more successful. In his own homes, Farringford and later Aldworth, he and Emily insisted upon a routine that helped him compose verse and regulate the restless energies he had inherited. No routine could quite *control* the Tennysonian energies. Indeed, it is delightful to hear of their rare outbreaks, as when in 1884 the poet, now Alfred, Lord Tennyson, returned from his investiture into the House of Lords and, putting a tea-cosy on his head in the place of a cocked hat, re-enacted the ceremony for a friend.

Professor Martin has coped admirably with the lack of essential materials for the biography of Tennyson (Hallam Tennyson, the poet's son, burnt three-quarters of the family papers after completing his own, carefully sanitized biography). That is, he has gone diligently through the enormous mass of materials that do remain and speculated judiciously when those give out. His speculations are judicious because limited. He makes little fuss, for example, over the issue of Tennyson's possibly sexual feelings for Hallam. As a critic, in his comments on the untroubled disunity of "In Memoriam," or Tennyson's skill in portraying subjects far or near but not at a middle distance, or the distinctive quality of Tennyson's verse when it is engaged with a place hallowed by associations (the vale of Cauteretz, the sea at Freshwater), he is brief but unfailingly persuasive. All in all it is difficult to imagine a study of Tennyson which could be more learned and intelligently conceived than *The Unquiet Heart.* And yet the book is oddly at cross-purposes with itself. It is written out of a deep

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sympathy with the man and his works, but the Tennyson it is forced to present to us is an extraordinarily unattractive human being.

Tennyson was, to begin with, insular in the extreme: as Professor Martin points out he was condescending to foreigners and their religions throughout life. He found in Garibaldi the "divine stupidity of a hero." In 1848 he paid a visit to the home of his friend Aubrey de Vere in Ireland on the express condition that there be no mention of the Irish distress. Later he stood watching the Atlantic surf and commented that all the European revolutions of 1848 had dwindled into irrelevance. He was a grousing hypochondriac (as well as a genuinely sick man) for most of his adult life, finally dismaying even a close friend like Fitzgerald ("Altogether this great man thinks more about his bowels and nerves than about the Laureate wreath he was born to inherit"). He had a marked liking for acolytes—young men to accompany his ramblings and render him the express homage he needed—and he was prepared to drop them abruptly, as he dropped Patmore, when they grew tedious. He was grasping of money, holding on for instance to his Civil List Pension (intended for needy writers) while he was making thousands of pounds yearly by his poetry. He postponed marriage with Emily—claiming poverty—though his income in the late '40s would have made them both comfortable. He could of course love and respect other people, and inspire a corresponding affection in them, but the truth of the matter is that Tennyson was tenderest of all to his own poems, which he read aloud, hour after hour, with loving devotion and an occasional tribute of endearments ("There's a wonderful touch!" "That's very tender"). This is, possibly, no more than to say that Tennyson paid the price of becoming a much beloved and celebrated poet-prophet; he produced for others the Tennyson they wanted; in Auden's phrase about Yeats, he became his admirers.

Time will, no doubt, prove these remarks irrelevant. It will pardon Tennyson, if he needs pardoning, for having written well. In the meantime *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* provides a version of the poet's life that is certain to be believed and not likely to be bettered.

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VERNON YOUNG

Poetry Chronicle: The Light Is Dark Enough

INSOFAR AS *British Poetry Since 1970*[1] is a collection of critical essays, it is not a suitable subject for this chronicle. Since, however, it includes a small anthology of recent British poetry which the authors believe to be representative, it is a convenient point of departure for that perennially vexing question—above all, vexing to Donald Davie!—what is the essential difference between British and American poetry? The answer to this question is either self-evident or meaningless. So long as complete translation is not called for, the poetic language of one country can only be different from that of another by reason of the local idioms it exploits or, if subject matter is what we are primarily engaging, one body of poetry might be distinguished radically if the cultural assumptions from which it derives are singular to that country. On any second thought, further distinctions ensue. *British* poetry would include that of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In most cases, the temperamental attitude, the idiomatic sources and very likely the political bias of Irish, Scottish and Welsh poets would seem exoteric to the "English." (Consider Dylan Thomas by contrast with W. H. Auden!) If you then try, while ignoring these differentiations, to oppose British poetry *as a whole* to "American" poetry—as if all American poets wrote the same way and were not equally diversified by regional backgrounds, educated premises and enormous individual disagreement—you will arrive at an absurd generalization, such as Donald Davie's in his essay on Basil Bunting in this publication, where he states with innocent security that by and large "for the English poet the writing of poems is a public and social activity, as for his American peers it is not."

I doubt that Davie could justify this distinction unless he isolated his examples arbitrarily. If, for instance, one were to choose James Merrill and John Ashbery as American poets who are least open to concerns of a social nature, what would you say of Allen Ginsberg and the latterday Adrienne Rich?—or, to take a more subtle example, how would you classify Richard Wilbur, popularly thought to be "reticent," even "esoteric"? Even without reference to his Molière translations, I cannot imagine Wilbur accepting, with any equanimity, the judgment that he is a strictly private poet. When Davie is on this track, I think he confuses the extent to which an English poet is, as citizen, less alienated than the American from a national heritage he can readily call upon or safely take for granted. But this equilibrium is not constantly audible in his *poems*, if

[1] BRITISH POETRY SINCE 1970, ed. by *Peter Jones* and *Michael Schmidt*. Persea Books. $20.00

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their subject matter is not forensic! Pat to my hand are two English poets unknown to American readers, one of whom is included in the Schmidt-Jones anthology, the other not. They are as disparate from each other as night from day, yet neither can with any plausibility be defined as a poet of social orientation.

Peter Scupham[2] is recognizably a "University wit": that is to say, a poet whose language is more often than not at a far remove from everyday speech. All poetry calls for a struggle between immediate impression and ideal translation. In Scupham's verse the translation is compulsive to excess; he seems to write by a law of euphemism, resisting the native, emotive word in favor of its most lamplit thesaurus synonym: "a clasp of silver/ Closes the fissure of twinned elements" means that light unites air and water; a fish and its shadow are seen as "a gravelled bullhead/Dawdles a spatulate shade," and shafts of sunlight are named "Bolts of shot silk." His tendency—it resembles, in extremis, that of Charles Tomlinson—is to convert the organic into the plastic, the artless into the contrived, the moving into the static. Of the Catholic Church at Cambridge he writes, "The spire climbs out of every vertical,/ Its planes of stone dizzying to an apex/ Where gold might be a blush of weathercock,/A nimbus." Against this diction, more numbing than evocative, is that of "A Warning Against Sharing the Children's Dreams."

> Nothing's at ease here. Great soft armchairs roll,
> Tumble and toss, dancing a cosmic dance
> With numbers, matchsticks, clouds: white clouds
> Teased out of clouds—Lumps swell in the throat,
> Tongues weigh like years and toes are far as stars.
> The road goes smooth, then jumbly: the sun is calling.
> Sick and crying, a girl kneels in the hay.
> The landscape smells like a pack of playing cards.

Here, the subject has inspired Scupham to mix sensations, disregard consistency, confound substances and cut abruptly from one image to the next so that they coalesce without the kind of logic which properly belongs to prose. Two poems, entitled respectively "The Tragedy Of" and "The Comedy Of," are free syntheses of Elizabethan drama, in which selected reminiscences of Shakespeare enforce a tension otherwise absent from or too pedantically managed in much of Scupham's verse.

> The coinage rings false, the guards are doubled,
> And the Fool's head sits oddly on his shoulders.
> . . . .
> This royal daughter, unfit for the game,
> Settles her face into its hurt silk look;
> Gathers flowers, listens to the harsh birds.

You can rarely go wrong if you lend an ear to the Elizabethans.

Or, to judge from the astonishing poetry of Jean Earle, if you listen to

[2] SUMMER PALACES, by *Peter Scupham*. Oxford University Press. $9.95.

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Thomas Hardy, to Dylan Thomas, to the Welsh in your vicinity, to the wind in the trees and the stone in your heart. In one of her poems, "The Birch Tree," included in the above-mentioned anthology, Jean Earle studies, with hopeless envy, the frozen birch "attacked by the sun/ Suddenly set shining/. . . singing an ice-knocker, a glass tune, a preparation/ To free off cases of dead bark/ And be that simple wind-responding statement,/ A birch tree." But such liberation is not hers, she goes on to say, and her poems, one by one, carry, with striking if bridled eloquence, this burden of the unwarmed life. If I declare that her poetry is more impressive than that of any newly heard poet in the British Isles today, I am outfacing the fact that in the bibliography of the Schmidt-Jones book, 450 poets are listed as having been published in the seventies; two thirds of them, I'd venture, are unread outside England. Yet I cannot conceive of another contemporary English poet whose work might be as deeply dredged as hers, for I cannot assume that any other poet would have undergone a comparably hellish experience, the precise nature of which I am not free to infer. (Among the selections from eighteen new contemporaries chosen by Schmidt and Jones, her voice is uniquely passionate.)

According to the brief biographical account I have, the poet earlier wrote short stories and articles, widely published. She moved, at a date not given, to Wales, was married, and "in her middle life" entered a long silence, following which she "returned to poetry." This is her first collection, a volume miserably manufactured, it must be said, by the Carcanet New Press with funds from the British Arts Council.[3] The poems are quietly forceful and disturbing, the hinted chronicle of a life without any of the amenities most of us expect, either from society or from our own illusory self-satisfactions. This woman writes as if the world we live in had never dawned or as if she had been forcibly prevented from living in it. The world of her poems is that of an earlier century when physical isolation was the rule and remote country living was a common custom, the kind of world reflected in, say, *Wuthering Heights,* without the grand passion or the grinding teeth of opposed generations. She tells of "hills living their own lives," of ferns and boulders, of "Country Neighbours," "into whose eyes we never look."

> Sometimes a coloured coat
> Moves on their land,
> Or a sheet blows in the wind, or some human mole
> Throws up a mound—
> So the neighbours are walking and working,
> Looking for us
> Across the air and the water.
> How short a way—
> How far!
>
> And in the winter dark we see their lamp,
> They see our star.

[3] A TRIAL OF STRENGTH, by *Jean Earle.* Cacanet New Press. Distributed in the U.S. by Persea Books. $6.95p.

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"Village" is the only poem in which she acknowledges the existence of the Twentieth Century, roaring by at night.

> When we lie down, the neons burn through the curtains
> Into the rooms, scorching our old-fashioned sleep.
> Great tankers fly
> Corrosive liquids, the simple milk
> Freightered in loud drums, enormous decks of sheep,
> Hurtling down the Roman road.

A poet of removal, she is nonetheless importunate: her words are reminiscent yet secretive, poems of aspiring retrospect, of thirsting leaves and of lanterns extinguished. We cannot doubt that in "The Storming of the Castle" Jean Earle is speaking of herself.

> This life met anguish many times.
> Learned to contain, like bladder or like gut,
> The waste of dream within a private envelope.

Lawrence Durrell can with some accuracy be called British. Born in India of Irish extraction (his boast), he is one of those exotics produced by Great Britain who, while enriching the "English" language, takes a less than sanguinary view of the Isles from whence his inheritance came.

> Moss walls, woolen forests, Shakespear, desuetude.
> Roots of his language as familiar as salt
> Inhaling cattle lick in this mnemonic valley
> Where the gnats assort, the thrush familiarises,
> And over his cottage a colloquial moon.
>
> "Bere Regis"

In the very few poems among all he has written which have England as their subject, reproof is stronger than nostalgia. Durrell's heartland is the Grecian Mediterranean. "Tread softly/ for here you stand/ On miracle ground, boy./ A breath would cloud this water of glass,/ Honey, bush, berry and swallow./This rock, then, is more pastoral than/Arcadia is, Illyria was." So begins "On Ithaca standing" (1937) and this is pretty much the tone and temperature of all his Ionic celebrations. The present collection[4] makes available for the first time *all* the poems Durrell has published between 1931 and 1974. Thanks to Mr. Brigham's editing, each poem is identified by date of composition, followed by publication date. Durrell here emerges, lest anyone doubted or was ignorant of the fact, as intrinsically a poet. Written primarily for money, the notorious Alexandria Quartet is the grandiose prose parenthesis of a lyric talent which, if not major, has never been less than poetic. Of "development" it

[4] COLLECTED POEMS, 1931–1974, by *Lawrence Durrell*. Viking. $22.95.

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is idle to speak; he was from the start developed. His "Stoic" of 1971 is an echo of "Conon in Exile" of 1942, a pagan unrepentant, undeceived, self-ironic. Early in his life Durrell acquired a classical disposition, characterized at one and the same time by philosophic pessimism, sunlit serenity and an immovable admiration for the sensuous in nature and art. There he has remained, through hell and high water, through war and peace, through figs, milk and honey, with small sense of sin, sustained by illimitable images of cities dead and alive, of women dead and alive, and by a spirited gift for impersonating anyone: Cavafy, Byron, a desert father, philosophers, harlots, governors of Roman provinces, Fabre the insect man, and small boys. Durrell speaks with an eminently civilized tongue, whether he is tossing off light-verse satire of literary critics, Americans and psychoanalysis, or conjuring visions of a civilization despoiling itself. His best impartial statement of universal aspiration and disorder is "Cities, Plains and People" (1943, Beirut).

> All cities plains and people
> Reach upward to the affirming sun,
> All that's vertical and shining,
> Lives well lived,
> Deeds perfectly done,
> Reach upwards to the royal pure
> Affirming sun.
>
> (Part XIV)

> There is nothing to hope for, my Brother.
> We have tried hoping for a future in the past.
> Nothing came out of that past
> But the reflected distortion and some
> Enduring, and understanding, and some brave.
> Into their cool embrace the awkward and the sinful
> Must be put for they alone
> Know who and what to save.
>
> (Part XV)

Durrell's lasting reputation will probably be secured by his poems of place, unsurpassed by any contemporary for their historical saturation and their exalted scenic precision: e.g., "Conon in Alexandria"—"Ash-heap of four cultures,/ Bounded by Mareotis, a salt lake,/ On which the winter rain rings and whitens /In the waters, stiffens like eyes"; or "The Parthenon": "Man entered it and woman was the roof"; or "Near El Alamein," with its stunning last line, "Heavy with sponges and the common error"; or "Levant": "Something fine of tooth and with the soft/ Hanging lashes to the eye,/ Given once by Spain and kept/ In a mad friendship here and sadness/ By the promiscuous sea upon this spit of sand." I'm not sure he ever wrote a better spirit-of-place poem than "Sarajevo"; certainly none that for us reverberates louder with every year that separates

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us from (and unites us with) the beginning of our end. My older readers may recall the last two wonderful stanzas.

> Where minarets have twisted up like sugar
> and a river, curdled with blond ice, drives on
> Tinkling among the mule-teams and the mountaineers,
> Under the bridges and the wooden trellises
> Which tame the air and promise us a peace
> Harmless with nightingales. None are singing now.
>
> No history much? Perhaps. Only this ominous
> Dark beauty flowering under veils,
> Trapped in the spectrum of a dying style:
> A village like an instinct left to rust,
> Composed around the echo of a pistol shot.

Brewster Ghiselin[5] is a prophet of another color. He must have spent the greater number of his years in the American West and at first fortunately but in the long run with less profit had Robinson Jeffers as his master. Unlike the poems of Durrell, published during the same period, Ghiselin's are devoid of people and of any place where a human memory might have lodged in a monument of its creation. The poet's patent admiration of Jeffers and his historical determinism taught him to Think Cosmic; he has virtually excluded mankind in his scheme, devoted to a Wild West which can only become poetry because it is depopulated. He tends, like Jeffers, to reduce human history to a kind of unnecessary consciousness when contrasted with the eternal passage of the tides, the clouds, the moon; or with the instinctive certitude that lends beauty to the flight of a pelican—or of a buzzard. Nowhere is he as explicitly cruel as the Carmel Jeremiah; nor is he pursued by dreams of incest or enraged by political errors. His similarity is confined to a diffidence towards humanism and to a regrettable echo, which he has never for long eliminated, of the Jeffers intonation—both the long line and the somewhat biblical cadence, still evident in "Dana Point," (1980): "where ash of ancient campfires sweetens"; "and will hardly be augmented more than a little."

Ghiselin does have a personal voice when he is not kinetically in thrall to his mentor; he has fine moments when he says the Jeffers thing in his own way. A fruitful example is his questioning poem, "New World," in which, after praising the exertions of westering, a continent breached and settled, aborigines decimated, the Pacific colonized, he asks, in his last stanza: "But where is the new world? Only in time,/ In moments of the individual mind," and the poem concludes:

[5] WINDROSE: Poems 1929–1979, by *Brewster Ghiselin.* University of Utah Press. $15.00.

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We turn in the bed at dawn, we hear the sunrise,
We hear the silence of the mockingbird:
Over the earth the sudden future comes
Like beauty to the body of one loved.
Then day surrounds us like an empty room.

Numerically, Ghiselin's animal or bird poems are his most individual. Of wild life and the predatory character it inexorably illustrates he has a firm apprehension. When he concentrates on the creature itself, with small regard for its symbolic properties, he is admirably concrete, fusing image with action.

Slowly the buzzards circle to decision;
Heavying, they drop, bouncing like injured airplanes
Beside the heap the hot sun cooks for them
And the maggots dolphining in the dust.

"Sea"

"In Time of Fear" is as vivid a poem about a cat (about the dark underbelly of Cat!) as any I can remember reading and Ghiselin is equally clear-eyed on the subject of snakes. This, on a rattler, is one of his most satisfying poems, comparing favorably with D. H. Lawrence's deferential "lord of life" vignette.

I found him sleepy in the heat
And dust of a gopher burrow,
Coiled in loose folds upon silence
In a pit of the noonday hillside.
I saw the wedged bulge
Of the head hard as a fist.
I remembered his delicate ways:
The mouth a cat's mouth yawning.
I crushed him deep in dust,
And heard the loud seethe of life
In the dead beads of the tail
Fade, as wind fades
From the wild grain of the hill.

Mark Strand[6] has no buzzards or snakes up his sleeve when his vatic inspiration flags. For nearly twenty years now, a young man with his future behind him, Strand has been insisting, "Ecclesiastes said it would be like this!" His *Selected Poems*, with a handful added, reminds us that he published his best last testament for us in 1964, the poem, "When the Vacation is Over for Good," herein reprinted. In case we weren't convinced, he has rewritten the poem, or something much like it, many times, and

[6] SELECTED POEMS, by *Mark Strand*. Atheneum. $10.95; $5.95.

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while I might agree with him, in another context, that *yes, we've had it,* I expect him, *as a poet,* since he continues to publish, to find a more ornamental trope for his *fin de siècle* threnody—something like Durrell's "earth turns her cold shoulders to us/Autumn with her wild packs/Comes down to the robbing of flowers." Richard Howard contends that Strand reminds him of Ingmar Bergman and Edward Hopper. Meant as a compliment, the coupling (or tripling) is not without pertinence. With the proviso that in Strand's didactic verse I find nothing so implacably visual, I would agree that in all three men there's an insistence on keeping figures isolated from one another, which is as much an index to their limitations (of plastic handling or psychological flexibility) as it is a tribute to their supposed cultural insights.

Strand has rendered honorable service to contemporary poetry. His anthologies of poets, domestic and foreign, are indispensable; his sympathy with the tragic frontiers of European literature is authentic. I have a real suspicion that he is not as miserable as he sounds (I hope to God not!), that he is envious of the European tribulation because it appears to have produced, in itself, great grave poetry. Hence, he has cultivated a will to finality that enhances his reputation as a "serious" poet and successfully conceals the probability that what he suffers from is not so much the forthcoming extermination of the race as it is a searing nostalgia for an unlived childhood. Like so many Americans who desperately program the future—in one way or another—he is actually in mourning for a past he never had. Poetically, he does not encourage us to expect from him a modified forecast. "Lines for Winter" (1978), title and content, are stubbornly thematic.

> Tell yourself
> as it gets cold and gray falls from the air [Explain, identify or locate]
> that you will go on
> walking, hearing
> the same tune no matter where
> you find yourself.

States his nuclear problem rather well, don't you think? His newest poems, while seeming to imply extended preoccupations by including childhood reminiscences of his father and uncle shooting at whales (much of the American myth in small compass here) and by an ostensible soliloquy (is it?) by Leopardi, are as lugubrious as ever and they fortuitously support the contretemps I have located above. The last lines of "Leopardi" are indissolubly Strand-Bergman.

> Once when I was a boy, and the birthday I had waited for
> was over, I lay on my bed, awake and miserable, and very late
> that night the sound of someone's voice singing down a side street,
> dying little by little into the distance,
> wounded me, as this does now.

This life met anguish many times?

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On the other hand, that of William Meredith,[7] I find myself resisting the felicity which, in this selection, the author is attempting to impose on me. His introductory poem asserts that

> The Cheer, reader my friend, is in the words here, somewhere.
> Frankly, I'd like to make you smile.
> Words addressing evil won't turn evil back
> but they can give heart.
> The cheer is hidden in right words.

Frankly, I'd like him to make me smile but in these new pieces I find little to smile at; the cheer is well hidden. I find myself instantly disagreeing, I hope not too solemnly, with Mr. Meredith's claims in the above quotation. "Words addressing evil" directly might well turn it back, although it would take more debate than I have space for here to convince anyone. Beyond this stumbling-block, the test is in the poems; in most of these the poetry is in the pity. I'm prepared to consent that one man's laughter is another man's poison but I'm amazed to learn that Meredith believes these poems, which deal with such weighty or crusty topics as Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Anne Frank, the Nixon administration, the foreign personalities of parents and the dubious condition of lovers in the year 2075, might make one smile. Not very broadly, is my thought, and with not so wry a twist as when reading the many waspish poems Meredith has already bequeathed us.

If I sum up this group as disappointing I'm no doubt being arrogant because the poet has not surpassed himself. Yet expectation is a diabolic master. If I compare these poems with those in *Hazard, the Painter* (1975), to go no further back, I find none so funny as, in their tart way, "Music, Part II" ("When a person sings they press him in hot wax"), "Wholesome" (tempered hilarity at the expense of homosexuals), or "Rhode Island," that flamboyant opening—"Here at the seashore they use the clouds over and over / again, like the rented animals in *Aida*"; nor any poem so ingenious and discomfiting as "Nausea," a fantastic mix of metaphors (art in the Brera, a butterfly chased by a sparrow, pilots practising dog-fights). Perhaps the truth is that Meredith, whom I've long since placed among the caustic aristocrats of American verse, is in a mood of forgiveness and reconciliation at an hour when, to my eyes and ears, the world at large least deserves forgiveness and reconciliation.

As for those "right words" in which the Meredith cheer is hidden, few of his new poems feature the exacting diction which has heretofore been a signature. The qualifiers in, for instance, "Remembering Robert Lowell," are as false to that poet's voice as they are to Meredith's own. "The message you brought back again and again / from the dark brink had the glitter of truth." Mr. Meredith would not, I feel sure, accept either "dark brink" or "glitter of truth" from his students. Can Lowell's verse *ever* be thought of as *glittering*? And when Meredith invents those twenty-first-century lovers in the Canadian woods, without guessing that they'll be

[7] THE CHEER, by *William Meredith*. Knopf. $7.95.

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neo-barbarians, he tells them, "Enjoy the feathery presences [that's *us*!] no sadder than your own. . . . an Indian brave and his maiden, / a French girl and her man— / the leaves renew the weavings / and lacings of the flesh/Here is the sound of ours." This is lacy stuff indeed from the mind of the poet who gave us "The Wreck of the *Thresher*." It's decent of Meredith to try bucking us up but at this point his ability to do so is better predicated in the work he has previously signed and sealed.

Charles Simic[8] co-edited with Mark Strand the excellent anthology, *Another Republic* (1976). He shares with Strand an unmitigated conviction that Armageddon is not far off. But whereas the American is seemingly prompted by future fears alone, Simic, a Yugoslav, born to gallows humour as the sparks fly upward, is hounded by the past—the past, one presumes, not simply of his Serbian childhood: the past of Europe, which he retells as a succession of mini-Grimm fairy tales at their most monstrous, peopled by goblins, witches, men marching, blood and bones, phantom horses in the snow, Mongols and foxes: in short, all the paraphernalia of what he himself calls here The Great Dark Night of History. His Yugoslavia is a peninsula of the mind, unrecognizable as the same landscape which, under the aspect of Classical and Byzantine myth, Durrell, with whatever reservations, has glorified. Simic would never describe Sarajevo as an "ominous dark beauty flowering under veils." In fact he would never name Sarajevo. He speaks by the fable; his method is to transpose historical actuality into a surreal key. If his obsessions are less tiresome than Strand's it is because, first of all, he feels the European yesterday on his pulses; further, because he does not merely prognosticate, he *embodies*.

A man makes poetry from whatever experience is most formidable to him. Simic, a graduate of NYU, married and a father in pragmatic America, turns, when he composes poems, to his unconscious and to earlier pools of memory. Within microcosmic verses which may be impish, sardonic, quasi-realistic or utterly outrageous, he succinctly implies an historical montage, as he does in his poem, "Classic Ballroom Dances" (totally inappropriate as a book title), of Europe from Hieronymus Bosch to Democratic Socialism. His acid etchings of the future reduce Mark Strand's worst fears to merely professorial tremors; the best (well, the most apocalyptic) of these were in *Dismantling the Silence* (Braziller, 1971), poems of dread matched only by Sylvia Plath or Anthony Hecht. The poem, "Ax," began "Whoever swings an ax / Knows the body of a man / Will again be covered with fur"; it closed with the nearest thing to a self-explanation which this most Gothic of modern poets has proffered.

> These dark prophecies were gathered,
> Unknown to myself, by my body
> Which understands historical probabilities,
> Lacking itself, in its essence, a future.

[8] CLASSIC BALLROOM DANCES, by *Charles Simic*. Braziller. $6.95; $3.95.

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Simic can scarcely improve on the bizarre juxtapositions and the hobgoblin midnights of the soul which he envisioned in that volume. There is evidence among the new poems that his hallucinations are wearing thin. For better or worse he is trying out new techniques of expression, less traditional than before—perhaps I should say less dependent than before on the forms of balladry and the nursery rhyme. They are not as pictorial, not as sensual, which may be a loss. His new handling of the vintage subject is no less ironic but in one long poem it is much more impersonal, viz:

Note
as it gets darker
  that little
can be ascertained
of the particulars
  and of their true
magnitudes

or, in this sequence, the expressionism has become elliptical, much like Kinsella's.

No one at all. An eye in a world
That would otherwise remain dark.
Improbable sky. His two hands.
The austere exhibits of his two hands.

They are not there. No matter. Voices
Of children in the street. Distant.
Games of another country, another age.
A hush. . . .

Following Simic it seems to me inevitable to take up the poems of Marie Luise Kaschnitz, who died in 1974 without her work ever having been known to English-language readers. The select volume[9] now sponsored by the Lockert Library, with perfect translations by Lisel Mueller, is a belated memorial to a poet of tragic dignity and impeccable conscience who lived through decades of Central European defeat and shame when it must have been easier to die than to live, easier to live in aloof bitterness than to recover, as she courageously did, sources of love and creative confidence. As outlined by Lisel Mueller, the poet's life comprised three distinct phases. Her childhood and coming-of-age, pre-World-War I, were passed on an estate near Karlsruhe. Shortly after the First World War she left this stronghold of privilege to support herself and in 1925 she married Guido Kaschnitz von Weinberg, an archeologist, accompanying him to Rome, Sicily and various ancient sites of the East-

[9] SELECTED LATER POEMS OF MARIE LUISE KASCHNITZ, trans. by Lisel Mueller. Princeton University Press. $9.95; $4.95.

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ern Mediterranean, a locale that left an enduring presence in the otherwise stygian experience of her later years in Frankfort under the Third Reich, years which she survived bodily at a terrible expense of spirit, as Germany tried to impress Hitler's inhumanism on the world. Evidently her life was then largely sustained by her love for her husband. They survived World War II but her husband died in the fifties, leaving her bereft and, as a poet, wordless, for several years.

The poems selected by Lisel Mueller represent the emergent poet as she struggled with the options of total despair and latent trust in whatever powers she could summon from the wreck of history and from her response to postwar reconstruction, as monstrous, almost, to her sense, as the former pretensions of the Reich. Unlike Paul Célan who, refusing to accept the language of a country which had destroyed his parents, strove to convert German syntax into a tortured instrument of highly allusive communication, opaque and unyielding, Marie Luise developed a transparent, fluid language that allowed no possibility of being misconstrued. Her diction in the later poems is lucidly idiomatic as she wavers between cynicism and poise, between regained life and advancing age. *Broadcast for Women* is in her acerbic manner, polemical recipes for survival.

> Pour milk into the telephone
> Let your cats sleep
> In the dishwashers
> Smash the clocks in your washing machines
> Leave your shoes behind
> . . . .
> Teach your children the alphabet of foxes
> Turn the leaves in your gardens silver side up
> Take the advice of the owl
> . . . .
> Don't be too sure
> Evening will come
> Don't be too sure
> That God loves you.

Lisel Mueller's English equivalents, here as everywhere, are meticulous constructions of ear and artifice. Always, in these irreducible verses, recovery fights with nihilism. One of the poet's most reassuring changes of heart is in the poem, "Dear Sun." It could have been dedicated to us all.

> We believe the time has come
> To stop loving anyone
> And give up our planet
> Let it drift
> Cold among cold satellites
> But the undiminished
> Daily witness
> Of lips kissing

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Dear sun
Good earth
Forever and ever
Knows better.

For Susan Astor,[10] a new American poet writing herself out of suburbia, "the daily witness of lips kissing" is, if undiminished, clandestine, an activity that supports her (sometimes facetious) conviction that we are unsuccessfully escaping from our kinship with the beasts. "Cheating" records, in the urban scene, mysterious disappearances at lunch-time, contrived alibis in mid-afternoon, implausible conferences at odd hours.

Everywhere people are inappropriately moist in the middle of the day;
Breathless, they are smiling at their spouses
(Who are not smiling) and explaining in great detail.
And their spouses are standing by, as skeptical as Joseph
Who stood burning in the desert, clenching his teeth,
While Mary told him this fantastic
Cock and bull story.

The incompatibility of man with his fellow-creatures of the wild or the lair or the web is no less absolute because you can observe his resemblance to them. Susan Astor sees animals in human terms, humans as animals: an uncle she describes as a mammoth, two neighbors as a cow and a bull. "Dame," her title poem, is about a dog, "almost a dizzy blonde / Nearsighted / Anxious to please / Confused." A dying relative, seemingly hairless, almost without limbs, is "a misplaced sparrow" and "Homing" begins, "My nest has been disturbed." "The Cats We Gave Away," too long for effective quotation in part, is her most impudent effort: treating a sentimental subject with redemptive undertones that contribute a measure of spookiness; we have let all those cats, now foraging in other climes, lose *us* and by so doing have lost part of our selves. To address such a theme seriously demands a control of tone and to this Susan Astor is tactfully equal; she never confuses the absurd with the grotesque or the marginal reflection with a pious analogy. Her goddess is wit and to that deity she owes her balanced speech when she writes, as she frequently does, of death and comic transfiguration. Discoursing "On the Mortality of Bugs," she notes that "Some are squashed flat. . . .

Some know a way
To eke the dying out: They pose and twitch
For the collage. . . .

A few resist the ultimate design,
Hold in their husks like breath
Until they simply are not
Thick enough to die.

[10] DAME, by *Susan Astor*. University of Georgia Press. $8.50; $4.50.

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Beyond the world we control, or believe we control, is the realm of those others—inviolate, remote, untouchable, pre-conscious: "a road the crow still owns, / Paved with the flesh of scarecrows, / A path not even Frost would take." Since, however, we have now lost confidence in our multiple adaptations, we are envious of that simple design in which we glimpse not only the limited specialization of the feral and the sluggish but also a source of joy we have lost in our complexity. So, at any rate, I read, not too heavily I would like to think, Susan Astor's poem, "Sea People," as she invokes "the limbless mammals [who] / stroke the sea" and "unencumbered, pulse and wallop / Over shells and tentacles. . . . Loving without lips, / Nursing without noise."

> . . . We pile our cities up like blocks
> And climb them, chattering,
> While underneath
> The vowel-voiced animals
> Just swim
> And arch their bodies into smiles.

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G. E. MURRAY

Seven Poets

CONTEMPORARY LIFE MAY BE STRANGER THAN FICTION, but not poetry. Even in this time tranquilized to sullen indifference and outrage, the truth-loving misdirections of our poets can still amaze, if not always commandeer faith, in ways at once dazzling, practical, and enduring. At a minimum, incisive poets may serve the era by suggesting some levels of personal good sense relative to certain senseless, impersonal realities. Further to the point, the right poet's eye can fire mysteries in both extreme and ordinary events. Such aspects of the art connect with the modern poet's secret goal to establish a private foothold of authority, what John Berryman called "imperial sway," or that which Wallace Stevens understood as "a sensible ecstasy." It would seem that this is the potential edge poetry makes available to any number of its most capable and intimate handlers.

Louis Simpson, of course, knows where and how this authoritative edge cuts. Indeed, just when it seems that Simpson has reached the comfortable height of his powers, as evidenced by six formidable earlier collections, including the Pulitzer Prize winning *At the End of the Road,* he penetrates forward with *Caviare at the Funeral.*[1]

All of his best ruling qualities are displayed in this work: the introspective and observant eye, expressive detail, an easy mastery of line and stanza, the storyteller's craft and unassailable wisdom, a spirit of slightly cryptic conversation, his way of rendering anew the tactile world, usually in lamentable decline or disrepair. All this we have come to expect from Simpson.

But now there is more: this poet's ability to transmute elements of his poems into something even richer and more profound than before, to invest the poem with an unmistakable radiance that inspires the lines yet somehow remains outside them, like a nimbus around the head of a saint. One begins to suspect that he sanctions this effect, in part, through an extensive range of delivery systems—descriptive, lyrical, funny, somber, fantastic. So much of Simpson's maturity comes, ironically, from his ability to heed the challenges of experiment, to stay verbally energetic.

The longer storytelling poems remain his most compelling, in this instance particularly the title work, "Chocolates," "The Man She Loved," "Sway," "Typhus," and "Why Do You Write About Russia." Sometimes it is as if Simpson is the most cunning of sleuths, able to reconstruct the far-fetched story of a life from "the contents of your purse . . . /among Kleenex, aspirin,/chewing gum wrapper, combs, et cetera." Then other

[1] CAVIARE AT THE FUNERAL, by *Louis Simpson.* Watts. $7.95.

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times the story merely emerges from air, the narrator staring out the kitchen door on a hot, bug-ridden night.

There is humor here, too, but what to call it? Not black humor, and not white humor either. Poetic humor, then, in the most delicate of circumstances. And the wisdom of the humor comes from the association created between the body of the poem's stated experience and Simpson's imposition of a conclusion, his valued judgment at the end, which understands that the "words you thought were a joke,/And applied to someone else,/ were real, and applied to you."

As usual, Simpson also examines the underbelly of American landscape, our urban shams and sorrows, especially in the excellent three-part movement "The Beaded Pear." But he confronts more than the bitter shortcomings inherent in our roadside junkyards, shopping malls and real estate agencies. American life—in its abundance and flux—is his projected subject. Since he does encompass so much, in unpredictable patterns, unconcerned with climaxes (the usual poetical devices are unnecessary here), the lines at last just move. Then the pointillist's dots of individual images begin to shape into surprisingly complex yet familiar configurations. Once onto this mode, one is forced to conclude that it's the real world that is arbitrary, while these poems seem inevitable.

Such is the final authority Simpson commands in this edition of thirty-four new titles, most of which provide conclusive evidence of remarkable advances in suppleness, clarity, balance, scope of feeling and thought amid the strangeness of contemporary passions.

Sydney Lea is neither as ironic nor as magnanimous in expression as Simpson in his bittersweet and memorable first book, *Searching the Drowned Man*.[2] What impresses initially is the pleasing disparity between Lea's formal powers and the wind-swept orneriness of natural life to which he subscribes. Both the ability and the perception speak well of Lea, as merged in the book's finest works, namely, "Night Message for Ted in the South," "For My Father, Who Hunted," "A Dream Near Water," "Elegy at Dana Point," and "Recalling the Horseman Billy Farrell from an Airplane in Vermont." Themes of longing for family and friends have resulted in some of the worst verse ever perpetrated. But Lea covers this precarious ground without triggering any traps. Instead he fuses emotion with the sights and odors and sounds of life in the mudflats and high pines. Doing so, he imparts new perspective to poetry's ageless, boundless themes—man's condition, nature's variability, love that fulfills, death that delimits, and the impermanence of human happiness. Further, Lea's empathy for others, however difficult to embrace, conveys his fresh poetry to a country "of partial light from the impartial moon," where there is "exquisite unmeaning in all/our protests of darkness,/pleas for relief." This concentration, along with the musical emjambments of his verse, raise several of these poems to the pitch of incantation.

[2] SEARCHING THE DROWNED MAN, by *Sydney Lea*. University of Illinois Press. $10.00; $3.95.

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To see it another way, equally positive, Lea writes in a burlap idiom that whacks through to elemental stations. Well-defined free verse, fricative lines, masculine subject matters—"A smell of whiskey./A far suffering dog"—give his poems a robust, invigorating texture. By the repeated interest in half-successful searches, unanticipated journeys, and the self's irregular changes, Lea creates a panoramic approach to his spirit of mission and resourcefulness.

Central to this poet is the wilderness experience: the achieving by mankind of respect for and harmony with nature, the balance of integrity between man within his skin and the grand pelt of the world. This is the crisis point, the intersection of perception and truth, premise and question, from which the poet emerges on his own terms. Lea's distillations of fears, sufferings and hope enable him to make sense and succor of his existence among things and homestead.

Home is the dominating specter in Wendell Berry's *A Part*,[3] a quiet, tough-minded, concentric work. There is a temptation simply to label Berry as an agrarian writer passively limited to whatever he can see from his front porch. But that would overlook the crux of his writing about "immemorial feelings," his appreciation that innocence can be made dangerous. It also would deny the dignity of Berry's fluctuating faith and anger, as best witnessed in "For the Hog Killing."

To be sure, there is no apparent strain, no false excess here, but rather a finely tuned knowledge of simplicities ("Fall," and "Traveling at Home"). And Berry rarely fails to make his point, whether discussing the unpredictability of weather or something even more abstract: "The gods are less/for their love of praise."

Berry's material is conveyed in the names of storm and river, flower and wildlife, fierceness and conflict, conservation and despoliation, family chronicle. But all this is finally a stepping-stone to the metaphysical, and the philosophical thrust of his poetry becomes a noteworthy attempt to demonstrate that the wealth of being is unavoidable. Here distinct categories of existence are welded into dualities by mind and experience and are thereby accorded significance beyond isolated phenomena: dualities of hate-love, reason-unreason, person-environment, chiaroscuro, presence-absence, conflict of heritage and personal values. What is especially vibrant is the successful fleshing of this into an organic symbol cum substance that we observe growing in concert under the sun, the stars, within the sentient being. This method of discovering importance, what Randall Jarrell called "the dailiness of life," overstrains meaning when it strives for mystical bearing. But Berry is wise enough to control his pursuits and thus the authority of the work.

He does so, remarkably, with what can be described as a middle voice, given to lyric passages that have an even-paced, conversational eloquence. It is the fine texturing of the register between feasible speech and energized song that makes these poems so persuasive. The achievement is

[3] A PART, by *Wendell Berry*. North Point Press. $12.50; $6.00.

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one of authoritative language and distinct poetic form, but it is sustained by Berry's unfailing heart for his subjects, seen more often in the deliberate process of insight than in crisis.

In *Streets After Rain,*[4] Elizabeth Knies proceeds in a mode similar to Berry's. The tone of these poems is forthright, without high finish, but always retaining its own expressiveness. The strength in Knies's verse derives as much from the play of intellect as from mechanical construction. Her poems command close attention, because the casualness of tone may obscure the seriousness of the argument. As Knies notes in the book's central sequence, "Rooms," she intends to compose purely, "without connotations, without past,/without perplexity," while exhibiting a tenderness for things and their sheer *beingness.*

All about her addresses the possibilities of community, love on multiple levels, as order replicates itself. Moreover, her fluid imagination supports the delicacy of oriental influences, and the resultant voice is all-in-all attractive, in command of her spare language and seeming to know it. Here the unadorned style proves appropriate, even when it grows periodically monotonous. However, the surface glance can be misleading. Her prosaic observations of everyday life—the objects in a room, a party, morning routines—suggest deeper resonances, "miracles of sight." Mixing homely instances with universal symbols, the poet tries to capture new glimmers of presence, the sense of a pervasive edge of energy.

From this stance Knies seems to come to a contemplation of the idea that home is not a place, not the street or the bedroom where you happened to cut a first tooth. Rather, it is a state of mind, a clear vision of where journeys have led. To go home, one must be free to choose other directions. And always the goal of the journey is peace, between people and within the self. This is an unspoken but pervading perspective in this book of well-crafted poems whose womanly speaker traces her relationship to human and natural worlds. Above all, her point of view is female, not feminist; her insights are those of acumen, not *angst.*

If there were a physics of suffering, some way to graph the pain of doubt, assessing Sharon Olds's impressive debut with *Satan Says*[5] would be an easier affair. Lacking any exact science of emotions, it should be noted that Olds's harsh and shockingly truthful poems, often wrought in a strident pitch, will attract a sizeable following. The style also may rally detractors, for to an extent Olds makes poetry as if she were lancing boils and enjoying it.

With both her masks and straight faces, Olds considers herself, variously, a temptress, carnivore, daughter, victim, mother, survivor, "a murderer/selecting a weapon." Mainly in the fashion of Sylvia Plath and Ai, which is to say passionately lyrical and driven, she confronts her terrors two-fisted, focusing—perhaps too narrowly—a raw, primal eye on life.

The failure of parents, first love, and disillusionment are perennial fa-

[4] STREETS AFTER RAIN, by *Elizabeth Knies.* Alice James Books. $3.95.
[5] SATAN SAYS, by *Sharon Olds.* University of Pittsburgh Press. $3.95.

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vorites among "poetical" topics. But on these accounts, Olds seldom falters, as she combines the serious and the absurd, anger and remorse, apathy and desire, spirit and gut-instinct. Finally, it all breaks into intense expression, most memorably in the clever and powerful "The Indispensability of Eyes," "Station," "Indictment of Senior Officers," and "Republican Living Rooms," each with its own biting strategies.

This is not to imply that Olds is altogether unforgiving, though the preliminary flashes of her poetry may lead casual readers to assume that shock value is the governing principle of this work. The fact is that ultimately Olds remains "faithful to central meanings" of love and shared experience, particularly as she renders them in "Monarchs," "Primitive" and "The Unjustly Punished Child." It is with this mixing of blessings—her significant verbal skills and candid emotions—that Olds will doubtlessly gain future illumination for her painful uprootings.

In the space of only two previous collections, Brendan Galvin has mastered what might be termed a refined post-mid-century style—basically sound in tone and value, lucid but slightly self-absorbed, and nostalgic. This comfortable vein is deepened and enriched in *Atlantic Flyway*.[6]

It is soon clear that Galvin has discovered his real sources in land and family and has learned to channel the currents of his individual voice to points far afield. The only complaint one might have against these poems—which typically are generous and serious—is that they labor under an overly sentimental affection for the past, contending "Everywhere you step/into the indentations under the grass." The problem is not with language or intention, but with the manner, and the manner tends to lapse into a sameness, with the poet's voice and conviction occasionally giving way to minor insight and low-level revelation.

That said, there also are a half dozen poems here that have a chance of lasting into the decades. Ebulliently, vigorously, even aggressively inventive, Galvin shifts from adequately informative work to certain poems that achieve excellence in light of their certitude and demands on the reader. Specifically, these include "The Old Trip by Dream Train," "Fear of the Waldorf Cafeteria," "Woodsmoke," "An Old Map of Barnstable County," and "Defending the Provinces." These works exhibit an intellectual firmness and poise, the feeling for word and phrasing that distinguish the true poet from the mere chronicler.

Gregory Orr's first two books—*Burning the Empty Nests* and *Gathering the Bones Together*—met with widespread and discerning praise for their metamorphic dream songs, which displayed curiously disquieting affinities with conventional existence and belief. One critic described Orr's early work as having "the abstract beauty of aerial photography. Everything is seen as if from a distance: silhouettes of experience, contours of feeling."

Now, with *The Red House*,[7] Orr settles on earth, zooming in on his personal terrains, drawing closer to the body and face that is his own. Given

[6] ATLANTIC FLYWAY, by *Brendan Galvin*. University of Georgia Press. $3.95.
[7] THE RED HOUSE, by *Gregory Orr*. Harper & Row. $9.95.

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a brace of attendant pieces set in Haiti (the facile "Haitian Suite"), Virginia and New York City, the book is predominantly structured around the 19-poem title sequence, a diverse rendering of the poet's childhood in upstate New York, exacting deep-seated perspectives on love, violence, sexuality, absence and wonderment "under arterial, throbbing stars." Here Orr articulates a first act of love or instinct in an oblique manner: "With scissors she snipped the blue/unbraidable chord, and hanged/my salty shadow from a maple branch." Later in another of the book's crystallizing moments, an anti-elegy for a brother, the poet surrenders youth's notion of deathlessness: "I pray we'll grow old."

Orr's handling and shaping of the materials of his perceiving offer what could be called a poetry of moving parts, a screen of language telling and incisive enough to alter with the changing character of the world itself and our lives within it. Out of his sense of the metamorphic reality we inhabit, Orr speaks with compassion, reverence, and authority—his voice an integral part of that reality. Importantly, a transformative power operates in Orr's poetry, a power of expansive proportions, for whatever the occasion of his poem, whatever role he assumes, through his spectrum of imagery and diction it becomes a vehicle approaching a separate realm: a poem that appears to be the total construct of his language and imagination, an echo chamber full of sound, implication and instruction. We have then an increasingly authoritative voice, though ostensibly still in formation, which already has pressed far ahead into a dominating and open-ended territory of realization.

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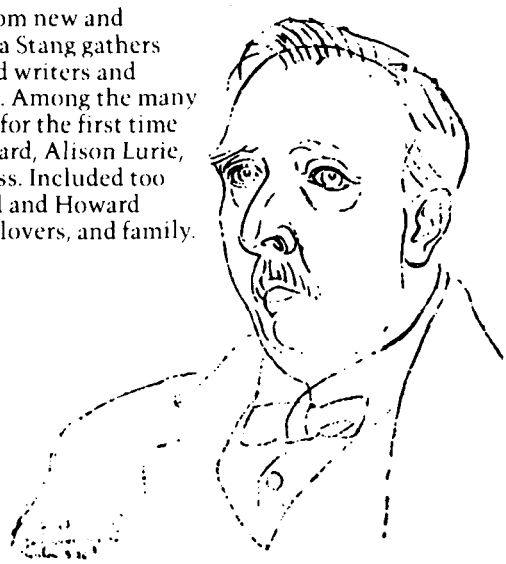

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